THE American Scholar

A QUARTERLY FOR THE INDEPENDENT THINKER

Twentieth Anniversary Number

AUTUMN • 1951

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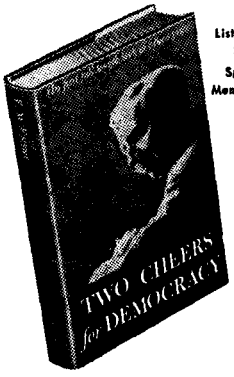

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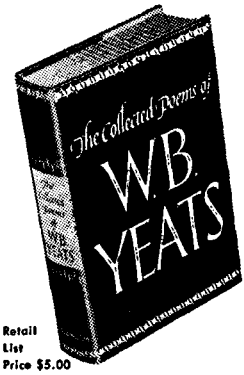

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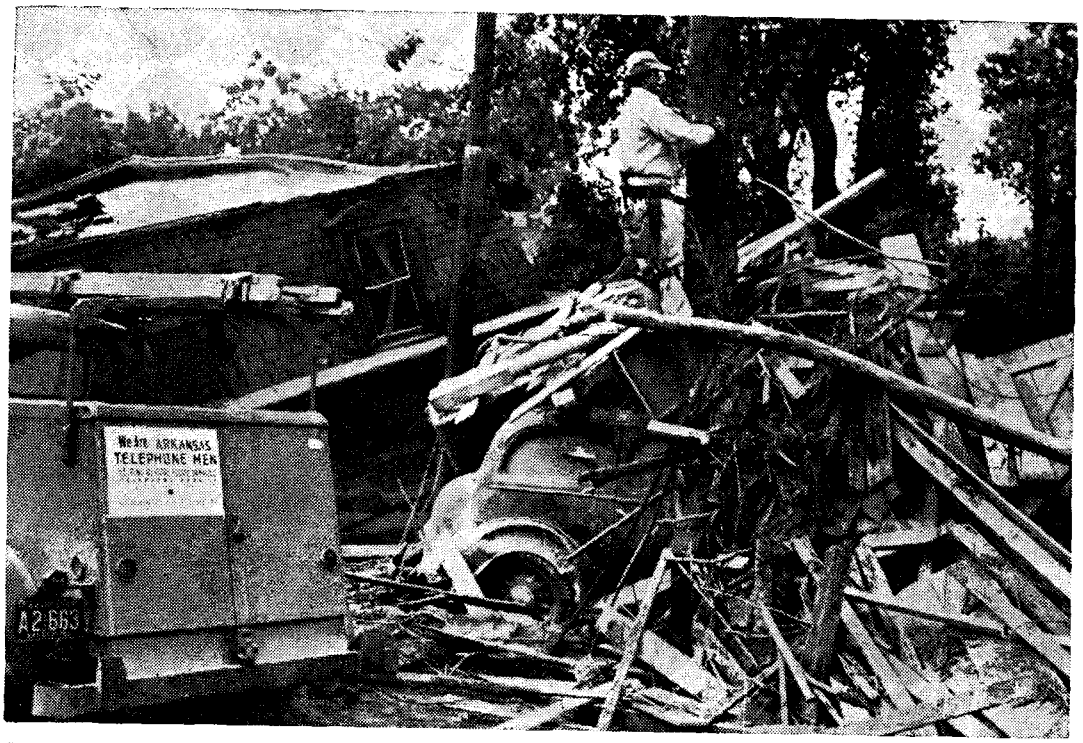

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Autumn • 1951 *Vol. 20 • No. 4*

Contents

A Twentieth Birthday, *An Editorial* . . . *W. Bagehot, Jr.* 393
If Anybody Wants to Know . . . . . *Mark Van Doren* 396
Aspen Leaf, *A Poem* . . . . . *Wilson Clough* 406
Mencken in Baltimore . . . . . *Van Wyck Brooks* 409
Ode: To the Ladies of an Academic Community Predominantly Male . . . *Clement Welsh* 422
The Near East between East and West . . *Charles Malik* 425
On Translators and Translating . . . . . *Lewis Galantière* 435
Harsh Honey, *A Poem* . . . . . *Bernice Slote* 446
Television: How Bad Can It Be? . . . . *Mahonri Sharp Young* . . . 447
Clay for Chinaware (Dachau), *A Dramatic Monologue* . . . . . *I. L. Salomon* 455

American Scholar Forum
Do You Know the Nature of an Oath? . . *Howard Mumford Jones* . . 457

The Reader Replies 468

Under Whatever Sky . . . . . *Irwin Edman* 473

The Revolving Bookstand 476
Reviews by Robert K. Carr, F. W. Dupee, George Genzmer and William York Tindall

Brief comments on twenty-four outstanding books of the previous quarter . 490

Volume Index 509

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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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A Twentieth Birthday

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR is twenty years old. Historians are by no means agreed as to just when the first magazine, or, indeed, the first periodical of any sort, appears in our culture; but most of them would agree that a magazine might today be roughly three hundred years old. None of our existing magazines is anywhere near that age. We have a few still hale centenarians—a *Punch*, a *Harper's*. Several very famous names—a *Spectator*, a *Tatler*—are now borne by magazines so different from the originals that it is clear we are dealing with separate individuals. Some very famous magazines—a *Gentleman's Magazine*, an *Edinburgh Review*—are dead after long lives; countless numbers have died in infancy. No important magazine has yet reached two hundred years of age. You may by temperament and training be inclined to dismiss as Spenglerian nonsense the notion that groups, organizations, which can theoretically go on forever by renewing their individual components, do actually have limited spans of life. Yet it is hard to avoid the evidence from the record: magazines are born, live, and die, substantially within the limits of individual human life.

If this be true, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR is celebrating a fine birthday. It should be in the prime of youth, able to look forward to increasing strength, wisdom and maturity. Its best years should lie ahead. Its character is formed, but not yet fixed in that inability to adjust to change which is the old age of magazines as of organisms. It is still capable of growth. Perhaps the metaphor breaks down a bit here; the human body has achieved its major growth by twenty, yet one may hope that in circulation, at least, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR will continue to grow bigger in quite concrete measurable ways. Yet in the deeper sense of growth—the ability to grow in wisdom—the

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human individual has at twenty just begun the process; so, we may hope, it will be with this magazine.

The figure may be spun out further. Our Freudian time, though it grants that individuals may—indeed must, if they are to be normal—mature with the years, still holds that the very first years are of major importance in determining what the personality will be. Not even the magic of psychoanalysis will transform, revolutionize, the adult who has started with a given constitution, and gone through a given infancy and childhood. So with our twenty-year-old of today. THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR was born of high-minded intellectual parents, and has had a good, somewhat permissive, upbringing. It has had a good deal of freedom, has by no means led a sheltered life in the derogatory sense of that term. But it has not, we must admit, grown up among the toughs, the roughnecks, the slicks. It has been, and is, American enough to be a little worried about its somewhat intellectual, not to say academic, background, but it has never allowed itself to assume what J. T. Adams years ago expressively called the "mucker pose."

More concretely, the first twenty years of this magazine, indeed its very conception, have set its character within definite limits. It cannot, except in an America quite incredibly changed, become one of the great mass media. It cannot become a picture magazine, or a digest of anything and everything, or an organ of any fringe, lunatic or other—or even a learned journal. It must continue to interpret for a thoughtful, relatively small, but influential group of educated people the difficult, confusing world in which they must live.

Since in this brief essay we have already brought in the names of Spengler and Freud, there can be no harm in adding the name of a third modern prophet. Even though you may feel that we are not quite on the brink of atomic or some other doom, you must admit that in this sixth decade of the twentieth century we are in the midst of what Arnold Toynbee calls a "Time of Troubles." As a child of its time, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR must reflect the troubles of its time. There are those of us who rather regret the old-fashioned magazine with its pleasant, rambling essays, its lyrics understanded of the people, its stories with plots and even an occasional happy ending. We may feel that all modern serious magazines are too much

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preoccupied with controversies, with problems, with what are really the substance of the social sciences, not of the humanities. We may feel that almost every article could, in fact, be entitled "What's wrong with—"

Perhaps we shall somehow get back to a little more serenity, a little more plain amusement or straightforward exposition. But THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR is firmly committed against escapism. If this really is a tough world, we shall face it—not, one may hope, with perverse delight or our own brand of toughness, but with the honest realism that is the core of our Western intellectual and moral tradition.

W. Bagehot, Jr.

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If Anybody Wants to Know

MARK VAN DOREN

I UNDERSTAND THAT I AM HERE tonight, not to be investigated or tried, or to speak in defense of anything I have ever done or said, but to assist in the discussion of an important principle. I hope that none of you came with the expectation that anything would be proved, either about me or about the Board of Education of this city, one or more of whose members have seen fit to order the removal of four of my books from the library of Jersey City Junior College. It appears that they did so without knowledge of what was in those books. All my books are about literature, or else they try to be literature themselves, and so it is safe to assume that the four in question may be so described. It further appears that the Board of Education was soon made aware of this; but that it decided not to alter its original position, alleging opinions and associations of mine as evidence that in any case I was an undesirable person who should be listened to on no subject whatsoever.

A few anonymous letters that I have received express agreement with the Board. But the great majority of those who have written or spoken to me have expressed emphatic disagreement, and have gone on to say that the action of the Board was either ridiculous or outrageous. I myself make neither charge. I am more interested in the principles and procedures that seem to be involved, and in the question whether Americanism and democracy have been well served in Jersey City. I come entirely alone to discuss this question. I represent nobody but myself; though I recognize how many friends of mine,

✪ Poet, critic, novelist and short-story writer, MARK VAN DOREN is professor of English at Columbia University, where he has taught since 1920. During the past year he has published *Introduction to Poetry* and *In That Far Land*, a collection of poems about the Middle West, where he was born.

This article was a speech read before the Hudson County Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action in Jersey City on February 20, 1951.

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some of whom I never knew before, hope that some degree of clarification will result. I gather that the issue is as important to them as it is to me; and, frankly, it is in their interest as well as mine that I am here, against my own natural inclination to live without trouble in the country I love.

Some of these friends have pointed out to me that the incident which inspired this meeting is already in some measure out of date. A rapidly growing number of citizens, from President Truman on down, have in recent weeks and days indicated their doubt that our program of security—in itself an absolutely necessary thing—is being handled to the best advantage: to the advantage, that is, of our own health and strength at a time when we need health and strength as never perhaps before. A religious leader in New York, for example, was all but stating a commonplace when in the newspapers for February 11 he said: "That American security is endangered is undeniable; but the greatest threat to our security is the fear that drives us to limit the very freedoms that have made us strong. Investigations and oaths and complex security laws—which in effect censor opinion rather than control conduct—are not providing the strength we need to meet the challenge of the international situation. . . . Scholars are becoming suspect, distinguished thinkers are discouraged from government service, and the spirit of free inquiry at great universities is in danger of being curtailed. . . . By making one's associations the test of loyalty, by identifying any unorthodox viewpoints with communism, we put a premium on conformity and stifle the spirit of freedom, the right to criticize, by which democracy lives and grows." The statement, however, is still not commonplace enough; that is why we are here tonight.

By a coincidence more pertinent yet to the reason for our meeting, I received only week before last, from the American Library Association, a copy of its Library Bill of Rights. This document is a welcome sign that groups of Americans are taking their own steps these days to safeguard their existence. I quote its third paragraph: "Censorship of books, urged or practiced by volunteer arbiters of morals or political opinion or by organizations that would establish a coercive concept of Americanism, must be challenged by libraries in maintenance of their responsibility to provide public information and

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enlightenment through the printed word." The application of these excellent words to the Board of Education's act in removing my books from one of the libraries for which it is responsible may not appear on one count to be perfect, and indeed by my own judgment is not. I happen to believe, and I have often said, that the right of school authorities to select the books their students shall read is not to be infringed. But on another count the application is clear. The Jersey City Board of Education, after conceding that my books are unobjectionable, still call their author objectionable—do so publicly —and still presume to protect the students of at least one college from contact with his mind.

They do this to me, it might appear, because they disagree with some of my opinions and disapprove of some of my associations. I say "it might appear," for I am not at all certain that they know any more about my opinions than they do about my books; though it is clear that they jump to conclusions, and want others to do so, from the associations they list and allege. I do not propose to challenge their list, though to the best of my knowledge it is sometimes erroneous, and at other times, if not erroneous, misleading. I am not here to repudiate anything I ever said, or to deny that I joined others in saying it—often through organizations which at the time were objectionable to nobody. An example would be the Independent Citizens' Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, which I joined with many others in 1944 to assist in the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt as President of the United States, and from which I subsequently resigned. Nor is there time to argue the merits of my beliefs—either their present merits or their merits in the context (sometimes five, sometimes ten, sometimes twenty years old) which produced them. I am here to consider with you the inference which the Board of Education has publicly drawn from them—whether or not to my personal damage may not for the moment matter; or whether to the damage of the Board of Education's prestige, which might be supposed to depend upon its conduct of any affair involving logic and justice.

The one thing the Board did not do—indeed, by saying that the case was "closed" it showed it did not want to do it—was to discover what my opinions actually were and are, to consider their truth or

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untruth, and if they seemed untrue, to refute them by fair means. The Board seems not to be interested in the good old institution of argument. If I have ever been wrong in anything I publicly said or joined others in saying, I deserve to be proved wrong and in fact should welcome it. I could have been wrong; I can be wrong now; and certain of my friends who disagreed with me about particular matters have told me so, and given their reasons why, and sometimes I have found these to be good reasons. This, I take it, is the process of civilization. By the same token it is not, I take it, the process of civilization to say of someone with whom you disagree either that he is your personal enemy—which does not follow at all—or that he is the enemy of his country and of civilization itself. To be called irrelevant and erroneous names in argument is not agreeable, and it does not settle the argument. It is a dangerous method even for those who use it, since it can be turned against them. If I am your enemy then you are mine, and I may be forced to question your motives for thinking and saying what you do. I do not call in question the motives of the Board of Education in doing what it has done; I do not insist on knowing why they exaggerate and insinuate as in my case they do; I do not accuse them of joining with others in some sinister cause. I merely point out that they have not proceeded in what I am old-fashioned enough to believe is the American fashion—has been, still is, and always must be the American fashion if our oldest tradition is to keep its meaning.

My faith in the American people and their government—even though some members of that government have shown signs of panic—is still so great that I say this here and now: Whenever I shall be asked my opinion on any crucial matter, and when I have an opinion that I feel deeply, I will express it and join others in expressing it; and I will never bring pressure to bear, by prejudicial publicity, on anybody who disagrees with me, though I will argue with him as capably as I can, and if he is more capable, or proves that he is better informed, I will change my mind and admit that I have done so.

This for me is the essence of Americanism. But there seem to be Americans (I do not know how many) who are so bent upon having everybody agree with them (I don't know exactly about what) that they take another line. If they cannot have agreement in fact, they

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want it in the form of silence. Nobody must say anything or belong to anything. For the penalty, if he does, is that they will accuse him of supporting a foreign force. That force, it goes without saying, is communism; or it is Russia, which gives communism today whatever force it has. But there is an astonishing similarity between the two dogmatisms. In Russia also there is no third alternative to agreement or silence. I still believe with all my heart that for us this third alternative exists—and not only exists, but is necessary to our survival. I still maintain that it is obligatory for all Americans to speak their minds on matters of common importance, with the understanding that the proper penalty for their being wrong, if they are wrong, is that someone prove them so.

Whether they are right or wrong is infinitely more important, I think, than whom they happen to agree with. The current assumption sometimes seems to be that no man ever thinks for himself; he thinks only with a group, or as a group dictates. But it is American, as it is democratic, for men to make up their own minds. I for one can say that it is nobody's business why I ever said what I said, but that I am willing to say why. I meant what I said, and believed it to be true. If I sound naïve, it is perhaps because many have grown cynical. And I am sorry to say that I must include among the cynical not only those members of the Board of Education who assume an alien source for my ideas, but certain very well-meaning friends of mine who talk as if there were nothing to be done in this situation, which they themselves deplore. I thought there was something to be done. I came here tonight, and I did not think it was useless to do so. Nor was I in the least afraid to come. The Board says it is afraid of me, and the friends in question act as if they were afraid of the Board. So far as I know, I have no fear, and I see no reason why I should have any. Some of the letters I got were letters of condolence, as if I had died. I feel very much alive, and furthermore I am confident. I know I am not alone in my confidence; though even if I were, I should have to act as I am acting now. In the America of Lincoln and Thoreau there is no good reason for fear.

Yet many Americans are afraid today. And if enough more become so, we shall have lost our freedom. Freedom and courage come and go together, like liberty and argument. It has been insinuated

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that I "support the proponents of a change of government by force." Nothing could be more absurd. If I believe anything, I believe that the only force that can change or destroy our common life is the force of fear, which by its very ability to operate among us would seem to indicate a doubt that we really do have (as I am sure we have) the best way of life in the world—if we only stick to it with free minds and pure hearts. The last thing we should fear is communism itself, which some Americans denounce in one breath as contemptible and then in the next breath honor by trembling before its supposed power. It would have no power if they believed in themselves. It could not dominate them if they knew it couldn't. An American poet—poets sometimes do speak of serious matters—recently published his opinion that we as a people are already dominated by communism. He meant, by fear of communism, and by an obsession with it that prevents us from thinking of any other subject. I do not like to think that this is true. There is still time, I trust, for us to come back to the business of being ourselves, and of making our own life as free and strong as men can make it. This means, of course, preparing ourselves against our enemies. It also means remembering who and what we are. We have been the admiration of the world; but the world shows signs of distrusting us because we do not trust our own tradition.

Courage, said Socrates, is the knowledge of what is to be feared and what is not to be feared. Some things, therefore, are to be feared. One thing we can fear is that we should go the way of Germany, our former enemy, or of Russia, our potential present and future enemy, or of both combined, in the suppression of thought and discussion, and of political action harmonious with these. We are not so hard up that we need to do that. We are not hard up at all. There may be those who think we are, but they have already despaired. They think there is nothing left except for us to become indistinguishable from our foes. They are already beaten. For if they mean this, and if the rest of us come to agree with them, there will indeed be nothing left. The shortest way to weaken ourselves for any struggle we may have with Russia is to throw away the one imperishable strength we have, our faith in individual liberty and dignity, and our faith that the life of any democratic society is measured by the

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number of its members who believe it to be necessary, for the common good and for their own, that they think as well as they are able, and speak as sensibly as they can.

A letter to me last week assured me that I would have perpetual immunity from such challenges as the present one if I became forever silent. In such a case the silence would not be greatly noticeable. I do not flatter myself that I have been a person of public importance. I have actually said very little; and if the list of organizations with which I have been associated seems long to others, it does not seem long to me, particularly since the association has been for the most part slight and in almost no case active—I signed something I wanted to sign, or I sympathized with certain objectives when I thought all Americans should. But I have no intention, even within these modest limits, of becoming silent. Silence in democracy is death, and I do not want democracy to die. Whenever I believe something I will say it, without any other illusion, if illusion it be, than that in difficult times it is good for thinking to go on.

I have never forgotten the face of a Connecticut farmer I know, a Republican of course, as he turned to me from the radio where he had been listening to a transcription of the latest proceedings of the Un-American Activities Committee. It was a face filled with fear. And fear of what? Of the Committee.

"I've never heard anything like that in this country," he said. "I wouldn't want them to be asking me questions."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because they were bullying that fellow. He may have done something bad, but I think they were worse. Can't anything be done?"

Perhaps there was nothing for him to do, but with him in mind I protested—like thousands of others—against the method and spirit of the investigation then going on. Communists protested too, doubtless for a different reason. I had my own reasons, which were as American as those of the Connecticut Yankee who was scared. If I also was scared, it was only lest nobody think it safe to object. When thousands did I was reassured—not for myself, but for a country that had still not lost its reason.

Such and so would be my record if I wanted to present it at this time and place. I have no such desire, partly because my record has

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not been kept, at least by me. I did not think I lived in a police state. The somewhat dreary list of organizations which the Board of Education has drawn up is in my own mind, I confess, an unreal and academic thing. The emphasis it places on membership and association seems merely technical, or else fanatical. My interest, as I have said, has never been in organizations as such; my connection with them has usually been short lived; and I am aware at this moment of belonging to none that should cause worry in any mind. The simple fact is that I never did knowingly join any Communist or Communist-front organization.

But I did not come here to say precisely this, and certainly I did not come to minimize my record, such as it is. It is the record of one who never hesitated to agree with others that the good life is worth talking about and fighting for in so far as words can fight. Most of my effort has been spent in the area where artists, intellectuals and teachers have to stand up for their freedom. It is of the utmost importance to me that those whose business it is to use their minds and imaginations should not be paralyzed, either by cynicism or by fear, or by attempts on the part of others to control them, until they lose their function in the world of men. They fared badly in Hitler's Germany, where their books were burned. They fare badly in Stalin's Russia, where musicians and novelists, not to say scientists and philosophers, must work under constant supervision from above. No great work can be done that way, and eventually, perhaps, no work at all. I should hate to see the same blunder made in America, and I shall continue to do whatever I can to prevent it. It was in this spirit that I protested when the Un-American Activities Committee turned its attention to the movie industry as a producing center of art, and when the industry itself made no effort to protect its legitimate interests. The result has been, as many foresaw, a lowering of movie standards and a lessening of the movie audience. This could be an accident, or it could be television; I think it is the chilling and numbing effect of a force felt from the outside, a force that can strangle the imagination even before it is born.

I am opposed to communism, both as a theory and in the form it now takes before the world; but I should like to distinguish between my opposition to it and that of certain anti-Communists who think

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they need to be nothing else. The good life is both negative and positive; it is against what would hurt it, but at the same time that it makes itself safe it considers what it wants to be safe for, and what it could build if it were free.

The American people may be moving into a period of unprecedented power and responsibility. If this is true, as I think it is, they cannot have too much help from within. They must hold their own, in peace or in war, and toward this end the services of no citizen may be insignificant. The services, or the ideas—or both, for they can be the same thing. The time to recruit these services is now, and the best atmosphere for the purpose is the atmosphere of confidence and faith. If all we have is the fear that communism can destroy us, we are already destroyed; for we have lost our self-respect. Democracy that believes in itself and remembers its great origins need have no fear of competition with any system in the world, least of all a system that distrusts individuals. The true opposite of communism is not anti-communism as it is preached by those in panic; it is democracy, which, when it knows itself, is never afraid. We ought to be not only against communism but above it, as justice is above despair. The Communists are promising to save the world, but we can really do it. Equality is a better thing than uniformity, liberty than the enforced love of law, and fraternity than the domination of one class. The question is how deeply and simply we understand this. If the world is hesitating to follow us away from communism, the reason may be that it sees signs in us of fear and doubt. We cannot convince others if we are not convinced.

My own position would be funny if it were not fairly serious. It is, of course, not unique. I have remained the liberal I was in the beginning, with the result that I have never been in what you would call the fashion. In the 1930's I was unconvinced by communism, and today I am uncontaminated by the fear of it that makes many Americans forget how much they naturally believe in the good heart and the just mind. By never fluctuating in my love of these things I have become, as appearances now go, suspect. But only, I am sure, as appearances go. It cannot be true—most of my friends persuade me of this—that any considerable body of Americans seriously doubts its obligation to be for those better things which Communists

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only pretend to be for. Communists can say what they do not mean, for purposes of their own; but we must mean, for no purpose beyond our integrity, whatever we say. And we must not stop talking. We may or may not arrive at the truth; but we shall utterly fail if we desist from the attempt.

In Plato's *Republic*, which is a dialogue about justice, there is a speaker named Thrasymachus who suddenly denies that justice exists. It is only the name, he says, we give to the right of the strong. Last year in New York, lecturing on Karl Marx, I called him the Thrasymachus of the modern world. He said, as communism still says, that justice is merely the will of the strongest class. Marx wanted a new class to prevail, and therefore a new justice. But justice is neither new or old. It is not one will, whether of a tyrant or of a class. It is itself, and it is the thing that all men love when they are serious. That, if you still care to know, is the politics I have.

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Correction

We regret that in our Summer, 1951, number there was an error on page 294 in the biographical note on Walter Mehring, author of the article, "The Lost Library." Mr. Mehring was a correspondent in France for the German and Austrian publications, Weltbühne (World Stage), Das Tagebuch (The Diary) *and* Literarische Welt (Literary World), *not for* Art and Theater.

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Aspen Leaf

WILSON CLOUGH

That was no common day. The very hills
Exulted in the autumn sun; and high
The lakes winked back the blue code of the sky.
The sky was tall; and all the streams and rills
Ran shouting down the gorges, clear and cool,
And rushed with laughter on a wide ravine
Stippled with granite sage and evergreen,
And darkly shining, moved from pool to pool.
The sun thrust shafts of light between the pine,
And coolly warm, the air excited like a wine.

An aspen grove ambushed the sun. At noon,
In saffron circumfusion, there it stood
Like bugles tonguing banners from the wood.
Between the boles, the aisles lay deeply strewn
With tapestries of gilt. The roof was gold.
And in the widened stream a rust-gold moss
Mimicked upon the stones a copper gloss.
Such spendthrift blaze no casual wood could hold.
It was as if upon the valley floor
A gold pavilion rose with rivers at its door.

So still, so tempered was this autumn day,
Forgot were winds and winter's mindless snow.
Softly a single yellow leaf let go
And skimmed the air, veering its vagrant way
Until it rested weightless on the grass
And blending, vanished in the carpet's gleam.
One leaf, the fribble of an autumn theme,
Winnowed from all the millions that must pass,
By luck, emerging from the countless whole
To play its exit in a small, insensate role.

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For, with the wind's premonitory rush
The autumn pigments tarnish, fade and fall,
The dead leaves chafe against the canyon wall,
The arctic stars congeal the valley's hush.
What then more brittle than the golden leaf?
A moment hovering on the lambent air,
A spark's swift launching on the brush-fire flare,
Too paltry for the platitudes of grief.
Since leaves will waste and rot in wintry rain,
No remedy denies the cumulative stain.

We are the leaves. We shiver in our storms;
Tremulous, blotched, for all our brave parade,
Swept by the holocausts ourselves have made,
Docile in trenches, tricked by gilded forms,
The first chill blast will churn us like debris.
Rash man, in violence squandering his years,
So briefly proud, so trapped in aimless fears,
Malicious, mean, cynic in charity,
His wily brain soon panicked, body frail,
Like to the leaf, how shall his tiny gleam prevail?

Think on the dead in graves themselves have dug,
The unclean bondage, and the bully's lash,
The handy bargains in cremated ash,
And say we cancel murders with a shrug?
That boots and fists should blur the human face,
That flesh should be so less than clod, than leaf,
This is the sordid jest that no belief,
No spent, evasive promise can erase.
These monsters still are man, lust of our lust;
This stench from our own hands is Hiroshima's dust.

Heavy the tax we pay for being man:
To grope behind the shufflers on our stage,
To strain between the lines upon our page,
Wrestling within the narrows of our span

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Because of this that links us with the leaf;
Subjecting dreams remorselessly to act,
Mistrusting fantasy, perplexed by fact;
If faiths betray, preferring disbelief;
Aware that hopes are froth if none seek proof;
And still the sky's infinitudes stave in our roof.

Perchance, behind the Snowy Range, one day
A silent grove sprang into subtle flame,
And having been, proved that it had a name.
Coinage of earth, reclaimed by earth's low clay,
This leaf of gold, this dart of earth and air,
Though vanity beneath the peak's cold frown,
Though drifting so, irresolutely down,
Was splendor still, until the branch was bare;
And in the sunlight, just before the blast,
Shone with a reckless grace, it may be not the last.

✪ WILSON CLOUGH is professor of English at the University of Wyoming. Mr. Clough has published a book of verse, *We, Borne Along*, as well as articles and short stories. One of his poems appeared in the Summer, 1946, number of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

This poem is the Phi Beta Kappa poem read at the University of Wyoming on June 2, 1951.

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Mencken In Baltimore

VAN WYCK BROOKS

H. L. MENCKEN, AN OFFSHOOT OF HUNEKER'S CIRCLE, had been writing for Baltimore newspapers for a number of years when Ambrose Bierce appeared from Washington and he and Mencken were thrown together, two years before Bierce disappeared in Mexico. Bierce had toured the Civil War battlefields as if to retrieve an experience in which he and the country had felt they were truly alive, and his disgust with modern America and all things democratic was equalled only by his hatred of "yokels" and "louts." For Bierce all reformers were "anarchists" and all farmers were "peasants," and much of his choleric thought and feeling drifted into Mencken's mind, which was predisposed to this home-made aristocratism. "Our one genuine wit," as Mencken called Bierce—forgetting Oliver Wendell Holmes, who was ninety-nine times wittier and much besides—undoubtedly influenced the man who was always girding at "peasants" and "hinds" and "the quacks who make laws at Washington." Mencken had something in common with Poe, who had also lived in Baltimore and detested the "rabble," the "canaille" and the "progress mongers," and he had found a philosophy in Nietzsche, the subject of his first important book—the idol-smashing prophet of the "master-races." But Mencken's "boobus Americanus," the hero of an "Eden of clowns" which he also called "this glorious commonwealth of morons," together with his *Americana* and its national imbecilities were oddly reminiscent of the far less genial Bierce. His characterization of the American people as "that tim-

✪ VAN WYCK BROOKS, distinguished author and critic, is probably best known for his critical studies in American literature, among which are *The Flowering of New England (1815-1865)* and *New England: Indian Summer (1865-1915)*.

This article is a chapter from Mr. Brooks's new book, *The Confident Years (1885-1915)*, to be published in January, 1952, by E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.

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orous, sniveling, poltroonish mob of serfs and goose-steppers" recalled *The Shadow on the Dial*. Mencken shared Bierce's peculiar cynicism.

Now Mencken had inherited, as he remarked, a "bias against the rabble" in his almost exclusively German Baltimore childhood, as the son of a German cigar-manufacturer who had married a German-American wife and who usually took him on Sundays to German beer-gardens. The family barber was a German, too, and so was the family farm-hand when the Menckens spent sufficient summers in the country to convince the boy that city life was "better," and Mencken had gone to a German school where they sang German *volkslieder* and the "pure American children" were regarded as "dunces." If Mencken was later inclined to regard most grown-up Americans as dunces, too—especially the "inferior" Anglo-Saxons[1]—it was partly because of these impressions that he gathered as a boy, impressions that could scarcely have been dispelled when he briefly attended a Sunday school kept by the author of *What a Young Man Ought to Know*. He acquired early the bourgeois traits that made him a good citizen, methodical, the most orderly of mortals, never late for trains, who never failed to appear in time for dinner, one who respected punctuality and solvency in others and who spent his life in one house in Baltimore. People lost in New York, he said, the sense of "abiding relationships" and the lares and penates that one found in this half-Southern city; and he liked what he described as the Baltimore "tradition of sound and comfortable living." Expressed in terms of a prosperous German cigar-manufacturer's house, this presupposed a contempt for the poor, for the shiftless, and for workingmen who did not know their place, the peculiarly German contempt indeed that filled the mind of Nietzsche who regarded them as mere draught-animals to be used as tools. That Mencken should have been drawn to Nietzsche and his notion of the slave-proletariat—a notion that was alien to Americans—was preordained,

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[1] "Whenever the Anglo-Saxon, whether of the English or of the American variety, comes into sharp conflict with men of other stocks, he tends to be worsted. . . . That this inferiority is real must be obvious to any impartial observer."—Mencken, *Prejudices: Fourth Series* (*The American Tradition*).

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as much as that he should have been drawn to Huneker if only as a lover of music who sketched for the piano ten or more sonatas. Mencken was a precocious composer of marches and waltzes. He was convinced, as a boy, for the rest, that life was essentially meaningless and that progress, democracy and religion were childish illusions, well summed up in the hullabaloo that amused him on street-corners when he stopped, looked and listened to the Salvation Army. Employed for a while in his father's factory, he went the rounds of cafés and saloons, taking orders for cigars and developing an epicure's palate; then, entering a newspaper office, he became at eighteen a police reporter and was soon reviewing the theatre and music as well. He picked up the jargon and ways of thought of the city room. When he came to compile his great work, *The American Language*, Mencken was to know whereof he spoke.

Such was the "ruddy snub-nosed youth" with the "small-town roisterer's" air who called upon Theodore Dreiser in his New York office when this novelist, whom Mencken greatly admired, proposed him in 1908 as reviewer of books for the magazine, the *Smart Set*. Dreiser had published in the *Delineator* some papers of Mencken's on medical themes and knew him as already a brilliant and forceful writer, one who suggested, in this personal encounter, "Anheuser's own brightest boy"—as Dreiser said—"out to see the town." Mencken had read *Sister Carrie* when it appeared in 1900, and Dreiser had impressed him as deeply even as Conrad; and this editor-in-chief of a Baltimore paper who was twenty-eight years old was in fact a voluminous writer in prose and in verse. It was true that Mencken had abandoned the verse in which he followed Kipling and some of the old French forms that were in vogue at the time, for he disliked all fanciful writing, he had no taste for fairy tales, and distrusted poetry as enervating and even as "nonsense." Mencken could see in *Alice in Wonderland* nothing but "feeble jocosity" and he had given up short-story writing, although he continued to write the burlesques that expressed his satirical feeling and his constant and ebullient sense of humor.

The satirical humorist in him had led him to devote his first book —the first of all books on the subject—to Bernard Shaw, though he had no sympathy with Shaw's socialistic doctrines; and meanwhile

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his discovery of *Huckleberry Finn*, which he reread every year, was the "most stupendous event," as he said, of his life. This led him further into the American language. On the whole, his positive mind delighted most in science, and, along with Macaulay, that "first-rate artist," T. H. Huxley was his model in style—"the greatest virtuoso of plain English who has ever lived." But most of his intellectual gods, as he admitted, were German, from Beethoven to Hauptmann and Ibsen—"more German than Norwegian"—and especially Nietzsche, who formed his mind more perhaps than anyone else and whose style, as he put it, was "almost comparable to Huxley's." Mencken's *The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, a book that appeared in 1908, the year in which he began his reviewing for the *Smart Set*, was a lucid presentation of the group of ideas that were to serve him as touchstones in his work as a critic. Had not Nietzsche regarded himself as a Polish grandee set down among German shopkeepers by an unkind fate? Just so Mencken saw himself as a sort of German Junker whose lot it was to live with American peasants. As Nietzsche had constantly pointed out "what the Germans lack," so Mencken set out to "transvalue" American values—another Dionysus in a pallidly Apollonian world, a hierophant of idol-smashing and "natural selection."

Mencken's great days were yet to come in the Dionysian twenties, the postwar decade of orgies that recalled *The Bacchae* when writers impersonated the nymphs and satyrs who had formed the train of the god of wine, dancing to the din of flutes and cymbals. The revels of the "jazz age" were in tune with the ideas that Mencken had been spreading in the *Smart Set* since 1908, in his monthly articles reviewing books, in his *Americana* and in other writings including *In Defense of Women*. He directed his humorous-ferocious assaults at American life in virtually every aspect. At the outset of his career, he said, an ancient had advised him to make his criticism telling at any cost, to "knock somebody on the head every day" with a bladder on a string or, more usually, a "meat-axe." For the way to get rid of obstructive ideas was "not to walk softly before them but to attack them vigorously with clubs." So Mencken laid about him in a slashing style that was full of Nietzschean mannerisms.

Thus, with all the brasses sounding, the great Menckenian cam-

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paign began, like the coming of the circus in the springtime, with showers of epithets, attacks on democracy, the "universal murrain of Christendom," and shouts of defiance hurled at the "smuthounds" and the "shamans." According to Mencken, the United States was a "commonwealth of third-rate men" who were in full control of the state and the national standards—Baptist mullahs scaring the peasantry, Methodist hinds of the "hookworm belt," theological buffoons and commercial brigands. The general average of intelligence, integrity and competence was so low that a man who knew his trade stood out as boldly as ever a wart stood out on a bald head, and the scene was a welter of knavery and swinishness, the operations of master rogues, the combats of demagogues, the pursuit of heretics and witches. It was the greatest show on earth, with Aimee MacPherson, for instance, "caressing the anthropoids with her lubricious coos," and with Orison Swett Marden as the national authority on the art of "getting on in the world as the only conceivable goal of human aspiration." Then there were the Elks and the undertakers who were initiated eighteen times and robed themselves to plant a fellow-joiner in garments that sparkled and flashed like the mouth of hell, who were entitled to bear seven swords, all jewelled, and hang their watch-chains with the busts of nine wild beasts. This race was as barbarous, Mencken said, as the Jugo-Slavs or the Mississippians with its "saccharine liberals," "right-thinkers" and "forward-lookers" and its professors, no longer from New England—a region that he loved still less—but now mostly from the land of "silos, revivals and saleratus." They "carried the smell of the dunghill into the academic groves." Nor could one forget the "uplifting vereins" and the countless American delusions and illusions, the notion that American literature was about to produce Walt Whitman's "new and greater literatus order" when it had no prodigies of the first class, few of the second and scarcely even more of the third or the fourth. This literature was colorless and inconsequential, timorously flaccid and amiably hollow, falteringly feeble and wanting in genuine gusto. It lacked salient personalities, intellectual audacity, aesthetic passion; it had an air of poverty and imitation; it evaded the serious problems of life and art; yet what was one to think of Paul Elmer More, who saw it as expiring with Longfellow and

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Donald G. Mitchell? More's "coroner's inquest criticism" infuriated Mencken, and he attacked the "crêpe-clad pundits, the bombastic word-mongers of the *Nation* school," although, like More, he too was an "incurable Tory." Was he not equally scornful of the "current sentimentalities," socialism, pacifism, deep-breathing and sex-hygiene? But, as he observed, Paul Elmer More preached the "gloomy gospel of tightness and restraint," while he was out to liberate and paganize the country. He seemed to agree with Nietzsche that "the one great intrinsic depravity" was the Christian religion, and his feeling that life, as he said, was "empty of significance" made it the more imperative to eat, drink and be merry.

Now there never could have been any doubt that Mencken played a decisive part in stabbing a flabby society wide awake, in shaking up the American spirit and rousing it out of its lethargy of optimistic fatuity and dull conventions. Mencken's astringent realism seared its adiposity, its provincial self-satisfaction and romantic moonshine, and, reintroducing acrimony into American criticism, he harrowed the ground for the literature and art of the future. As he said, all the benefits that he had ever got from critics had come from those who gave him a "hearty slating," for this led him to examine his ideas, shelve them when he found holes in them and set about hatching others that were better; and was he not right in saying that literature thrives best in an atmosphere of strife? Poe had introduced this three generations before at the dawn of the so-called American Renaissance, and what it really meant was that literary and aesthetic matters were felt to be worth the trouble of a melee and a combat. Mencken was hardly a literary critic, for his mind was devoid of the feminine traits this type must have to be effective. He was a social critic and a literary showman who had taken lessons from Macaulay, as well as from Nietzsche, Huneker and Bierce, and he fought with all his masculine force against the elements in American society that impeded the creative life and stifled its growth. A transatlantic Attila, with his own Teutonic fury, a coarse mind that had undertaken a literary spadesman's work, he accomplished a task that only a coarse mind could do. He was concerned with "numbers,"[2] the big Philistine public that blocked his way and that he

[2] See, e.g., in his essay on Dreiser, in *A Book of Prefaces*, the page-long table of statistics of the representation of Dreiser's novels in all the large town libraries in the country.

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attacked with his humor and his rude common sense—the "Texas Taines," the "policemen of letters," the rural fundamentalists, the "Ku Klux Kritics" that battened in the solid South. In their fear of the new literature that he was fostering, the "cow-state John the Baptists" and their colleagues and supporters were as thoroughly American as the Knights of Pythias or chewing gum, or Diamond Jim Brady, or Billy Sunday; and, defending what they called the sewage of the mental slums of Chicago and New York, he set the new realistic literature squarely on its feet. His campaign for Theodore Dreiser, a symbol of the rising Middle West, resulted in the general recognition of the other Western writers; and what did he not accomplish, too, in assaulting the "Sahara of the Bozart"[3] and insisting on a veritable Bismarckian *kulturkampf* there? It was largely thanks to Mencken that "Church" and "State" were separated there, in the sense in which these words meant much to writers—the republic of letters shook off its clerical controls; and it was more than a coincidence that the birth of the new Southern literature followed the publication of Mencken's essay.

It could scarcely have been questioned that the shifting of forces in American letters which led to the literary dominance of the West and the South—that this striking phenomenon of the twenties owed much to Mencken, and long before the First World War he had roused the imagination of writers to a sense of the opportunities that America presented. For, along with his abuse, he conveyed a feeling of the "prodigal and gorgeous life of the country"—a "circus" to which he awoke each morning with the "eager unflagging expectation of a Sunday school superintendent touring the Paris peep-shows." It was this that kept Mencken at home when the "expatriates" were leaving the country, filling every ship with a groaning cargo, issuing, as he put it, "their successive calls to the corn-fed

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[3] "Nearly the whole of Europe could be lost in that stupendous region of fat farms, shoddy cities and paralyzed cerebrums. . . . You will not find a single Southern poet above the rank of a neighbourhood rhymester. Once you have counted James Branch Cabell . . . you will not find a single Southern prose-writer who can actually write. . . . In that Gargantuan paradise of the fourth-rate there is not a single picture-gallery worth going into, or a single orchestra capable of playing the nine symphonies of Beethoven. . . . In all these fields the South is an awe-inspiring blank."—H. L. Mencken, *Prejudices: Second Series* (*The Sahara of the Bozart*).

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intelligentsia to flee the shambles." He answered only with a few academic "Hear, Hears" and remained on the dock himself, "wrapped in the flag," for he was happy in a land of grotesques where one could visit Scopes trials and camp-meetings at which preachers denounced the reading of books. He delighted in the "cowtown hell-robbers," the "whoopers and snorters" of prohibition, the pious pornomaniacs listening to radio jazz and stealthily rising and "shaking their fireproof legs," the hill-billy miracle-workers drinking poison and bitten by snakes and the "God-fearing professors laboriously striving to ram their dismal nonsense into the progeny of Babbitts." Mencken was a humorist, a more pungent successor of Artemus Ward, no longer the country showman, but the man of the city, and he conveyed an infectious feeling of the spectacle of life in America as a monstrous county fair or museum of freaks. Then he had the pride of craftsmanship that betokened the genuine artist in words, and, "naturally monkish," for all his worldly cynicism, he had much, after all, in common with the professors. His work on *The American Language* showed this in time. He esteemed the man who devoted himself to a subject with hard diligence, the man who put poverty and a shelf of books above evenings of jazz or profiteering; and in all these and other ways he stimulated writers, especially those who appeared after the First World War. If, as he said, these younger writers had a "new-found elasticity," together with a "glowing delight in the spectacle before them"—a vigorous naïve self-consciousness and sense of aliveness—it was partly owing to the influence of Mencken himself. He had seen an exhilarating prospect for American letters, as he put it in one of his essays, in the exhaustion of Europe.

Still later, after the jazz age passed, when he had become an institution, Mencken's limitations and faults were more generally apparent. It was evident that he had the vaguest of literary standards, that there were no fixed stars in his literary firmament such as seafaring critics must have in order to sail. In music, with which he was more at home—conventional as his taste there was, for he hated the "musical felonies" of Ravel and Stravinsky—he never wavered in his devotion to the "lovely music of Haydn and Mozart" and even went so far as to call Beethoven "noble." This was a word he would

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never have connected with a writer, for he saw in Dante the "elaborate jocosity" of a satire on the "Christian hocus-pocus" and in *Romeo and Juliet* he found only "tinpot heroics." He called Greek tragedy an "unparalleled bore"; he spoke of the "weakness for poetry" as "another hoary relic from the adolescence of the race," and, describing philosophy as "largely moonshine and windmusic," he referred to "metaphysics, which is to say, nonsense." He had no literary scale of values or he could scarcely have spoken of the "harsh Calvinistic fables of Hawthorne" or of Emerson as "an importer of stale German elixirs"; he could never have described Howells as a "placid conformist" because he was indifferent to the "surge of passion," or called Robert Frost a "Whittier without the whiskers." He was so undiscriminating that he spoke of Gertrude Atherton in the same breath with Sarah Orne Jewett, and "Prof. Dr. William James," when Mencken finished speaking of him, was virtually indistinguishable from Orison Swett Marden. He was apt enough when he referred to Veblen's "vast kitchen-midden of discordant and raucous polysyllables," but this did not exhaust the subject of the "geyser of pishposh" even in the matter of style, and his dispraise of American critics lost much of its convincingness when he praised the third-rate Austrian Leon Kellner. Then what was one to say of the absence in him of the sentiment of reverence and the "shudder of awe"—"humanity's highest faculty," as Goethe called it—the recognition of certain realities of a spiritual kind upon which all human values are ultimately based? That Mencken really lacked this one saw in his treatment of Bernard Shaw, his early master and one of his early heroes, who became for him the "Ulster Polonius" in 1914, nine years after Shaw had been the subject of his first prose book. Mencken retained so little respect for the man he had admired so much that he said it was Shaw's life-work to "announce the obvious in terms of the scandalous." Mencken remained a child in this region of feeling. He related in his *Heathen Days* how, at thirty-five, in Rome, he had dodged into a crowd of pilgrims who were to be received by the Pope, and, running the risk of detection, obtained the Pope's blessing—like a village boy squirming under a circus tent.

Mencken once observed himself that his "essential trouble" was

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that he was "devoid of what are called spiritual gifts." This was an actual trouble indeed, for without these "gifts" one lacks the scale, in the literary and human spheres alike, by which one distinguishes the ephemeral and the small from the great. Mencken's realistic note was admirable and useful, as one saw in his book, for instance, *In Defense of Women*—women as the logical practical sex, aesthetically responsible, wary, discreet, in distinction from the vainglorious sex to which he belonged. He was as shrewd as Benjamin Franklin there and in other books, the *Treatise on Right and Wrong* and the *Treatise on the Gods*—in which he admitted the reality of a kind of "progress"—but elsewhere his arid rationalism blended with a hedonism that was quite without spirituality and completely fatalistic. It was this tendency of his that blossomed in the jazz age in which so many writers were influenced by him, an age that also inherited the thinking of William Graham Sumner with his contempt for the idealism and "illusions" of the past. That life no longer had a purpose was the belief of millions then for whom the bootlegger became a national hero, and, while man was a "bad monkey" for many a scientific mind, others embraced the despair of Eliot's "waste land." Shakespeare's man, "glorious in reason, infinite in faculty," had been dethroned, and Melville's "man noble and sparkling"—where now was he? He had been supplanted by Mencken's man, the "king dupe of the cosmos," the "yokel *par excellence*," the "booby." Much of Mencken's humor was based upon these denigrations of the "boob" man, "brother to the lowly ass," whose pretensions he delighted in undoing, and his disdain of democracy followed from this low view of human nature that struck the note of the fiction of the nineteen-twenties. If he saw democracy as "the art and science of running the circus from the monkey-cage," was it not precisely because he saw men as monkeys and because their continued existence in the world was therefore so inconsequential that one had no reason to assure and facilitate it? Inevitably, from this point of view, philanthropy, socialism, pacifism, like the notion of educability, were sentimental, while Mencken's opposition to birth-control was deadlier even than his attacks on most of the other aspects of the democratic process. He said the ignorant should be "permitted to spawn *ad libitum* that there may be a steady supply of slaves." For

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the rest, he was convinced that the war between the "haves" and the "have-nots" was an affair of "envy pure and simple."

With all his reactionary cynicism, Mencken was a liberator who opened paths for writers and made straight their way by turning many of their obstacles into laughing-stocks, but his campaign against democracy lost any glamour it might have had when Hitler murdered seven million Poles and Jews. While much that Mencken said was true, the inevitable answer was that all other forms of government had proved to be worse, that democracy, as Whitman put it, was the only safe system; and, when virtually every thinking German was only too happy to escape to America, Mencken's assaults on the country lost much of their force. Time broke the lance of the "literary uhlan," as the German-American societies had called him, and the critic who had said, "Most of the men I respect are foreigners," ceased to be a spokesman for the "mongrel and inferior" Yankees. It was almost forgotten that he had performed a major work of criticism in giving the *coup de grâce* to the colonial tradition, while, by fully recognizing the new interracial point of view, he contributed to the nationalizing of American letters. More than anyone else perhaps, Mencken broke the way for writers who were descended from "foreign" stocks and who were not yet assured of their place in the sun, and it was he who signalized Chicago as a literary center and praised the new writers who used the "American language." Howells had long since welcomed George Ade and many another, but Mencken, who hailed Theodore Dreiser, was foremost in hailing Ring Lardner and praising with discrimination writers of his type.[4]

As for the question of colonialism—still a live issue in 1920[5]—this was soon to be settled, thanks partly to him; and perhaps it could

[4] "What amused Mark [Twain] most profoundly was precisely whatever was most worthy of sober admiration—sound art, good manners, the aristocratic ideal—and he was typical of his time. The satirists of the present age, though they may be less accomplished workmen, are at all events more civilized men. What they make fun of is not what is dignified, or noble, or beautiful, but what is shoddy, and ignoble, and ugly."—Mencken, *Prejudices: Fourth Series.*

[5] "The American social pusher keeps his eye on Mayfair; the American literatus dreams of recognition by the London weeklies; the American don is lifted to bliss by the imprimatur of Oxford or Cambridge; even the American statesman knows how to cringe to Downing Street."—Mencken, *Prejudices: Second Series* (1920).

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have been settled only by a critic of recent immigrant stock whose mind was entirely detached from the English tradition. Mencken's solution of the question was in certain ways unfortunate precisely because of this and all it implied, but he performed an invaluable work in helping to establish the interracial American literature of the future. Mencken had observed that the distrust of Dreiser was very largely racial—he was felt to be sinister because he was not Anglo-Saxon; and it pleased him to point out how many of the new novelists and poets might be regarded as sinister for the same reason. But, he remarked, the "old easy domination of the 'Anglo-Saxon' " was rapidly passing[6]—the nation was becoming "transnational," as Randolph Bourne put it—and what was the use of attempting to restore, as Stuart P. Sherman wished to do, the Anglo-Saxon tradition in American letters?[7] Mencken was right in saying that this was a "demand for supine conformity," for, in fact, the *restoration* of this tradition was by no means the relevant or desirable thing. What was important was the *recognition* of it, the re-establishing of a living relation between the future and the past, the sense of which, for a number of reasons, had been lost. Mencken was the last man to re-establish this relation, for, having no inherited knowledge of the American past, he was even antagonistic to its main stream of feeling. He was "frankly against the Anglo-Saxon," and this led to a confusion he shared with others, especially during the First World War, when the issue of "colonialism" was confounded with the issue of "England." One could never tell how far "pro-German" Amer-

[6] "The fact is too obvious that the old easy domination of the 'Anglo-Saxon' is passing, that he must be up and doing if he would fasten his notions upon the generations to come. . . . I am frankly against him and believe, as I have often made known, that he is doomed—that his opponents will turn out, in the long run, to be better men than he is." —Mencken, *Prejudices: Fifth Series.*

[7] Stuart P. Sherman was ill-advised—as no doubt he recognized in time—in his invidious characterization of the "audience" of Mencken. He said this audience consisted of "children whose parents or grandparents brought their copper kettles from Russia, tilled the soil of Hungary, taught the Mosaic law in Poland, cut Irish turf, ground optical glass in Germany, dispensed Bavarian beer or fished for mackerel in the Skagerrak." But here Sherman was describing the audience of every American writer of the future, and was this not written in the stars of the American past? An "Anglo-Saxon" critic was certainly "doomed," as Mencken would have said, unless he was aware of this and all it implied, and unless he was able to present his tradition as fitting the Americans of the future instead of expecting them to fit his tradition.

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ican writers were opposed to colonialism because of this hostility to England. But to fight to "throw off the yoke of England's intellectual despotism"—in the melodramatic phrase of Mencken's friend Wright[8]—to settle this age-old question was a service to the country; and in order to exalt the new "foreign" strains in the American literary world it was natural enough to depreciate the Anglo-Saxon. The trouble was that Mencken carried this to impossible lengths, and he indulged in grotesque misstatements regarding New England, especially, that a serious critic should have been ashamed to utter. One wonders what the proud "founding fathers"—or Governor Winthrop or William Byrd—would have said to his remark about the first English settlers, that they were "the botched and unfit"; and what was anyone to say to his statement that "New England has never shown the slightest sign of a genuine enthusiasm for ideas"? In *Puritanism as a Literary Force*, he said that the literature of the years 1831-1861—the times of Emerson, Melville, Thoreau and Hawthorne—was the "work of women and admittedly second-rate men." It was by assertions of this kind that he "liquidated the American past," as certain of his admirers praised him for doing, and this was anything but a service to the country or its writers. But that one could impute these feats to him was a proof of the force of Mencken's mind, and one could leave the balance to be redressed by others.

[8] Willard Huntington Wright, Mencken's fellow-Nietzschean, who was also pro-German in his sympathies in the First World War. This confusion of motives was evident in his *Misinforming a Nation* (1917), a critical examination of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Wright's ostensible motive was to combat the "intellectual colonization of America by England," the "insular judgments" and "venomous contempt" of British critics "for all things American." Written during the war, however, the book was substantially an act of war against British "bourgeois culture" and its "parochial egotism" in the fields of poetry, painting, music, philosophy, science, etc.

Without doubt, a similar animus, unconscious perhaps, against England itself contributed to the making of Mencken's *The American Language*—a book that one critic described as a "wedge to split asunder the two great English-speaking peoples."

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ODE

To the Ladies of an Academic Community Predominantly Male

CLEMENT WELSH

Come hither, Muses, for we find complex
The joy of hymning to the Gentle Sex.
(It should be "her-ing," but the word's fantastic
Applied to an art in origin monastic.)
Ooze out a drop of grace to fill my pen,
Now thoroughly emptied by the world of men.
May it, with every letter it unfurls,
Produce an epic worthy of The Girls.

Note, first, how academic things all render
Unconscious tribute to the Other Gender.
(And how, in noting this, my verse is tending
With happy logic toward the feminine ending.)

See then the Freshman, plunged among his betters,
Sustained now solely by his mother's letters.
Examined, Treasurered, Registrared, and Deaned,
It was but yesterday that he was weaned.
And even now he finds among his things
His poor effects tied up in apron strings.
His childhood gone, but not without a trace:
He looks for pastries in his laundry case.

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The Sophomore, to show himself a man,
Talks about Life, and how it all began.
His mother's photo on the study table
Yields to a photo-mural of Miss Grable.
In every dorm, a little group of males
Talks through the night of country, God, and frails.

The Junior, more mature, wakes up to find
Not sev'ral, but one girl upon his mind.
Foresees with fascination and with dread
The bridal noose slip gently o'er his head.
Lives out with pain his bifurcated hours,
Reciting first in Greek, and then with flowers.

The Senior cometh, grave, and almost shy,
Admitting he was married in July.
Arriving in September with his bride,
He hopes to do some studying on the side.
June finds him—and it sounds a bit improper—
A bachelor (of arts) who is a papa.

All took the course they called the liberal arts,
And all of them was freed except their hearts.

And oh, the Faculty! Those learned men.
You know them well, but think of them again.
Who wrote the lecture out for Gov. 11,
And verified the dates for History 7?
Whose was the lunch that gave the coach his strength?
Who cut the lecture down to half its length?
Even the Dean or, yes, the President
Will know at once what personage is meant.
She quells the household with a single look
Because He's in there, working on that Book.

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She sends him out to class, a little late,
His buttons buttoned, and his data straight.
She greets the Trustee visitors with an air
Converting *Savoir* into *Savoir Faire*.
And if, which God forbid, he takes his station
Within an office of administration,
He soon will find that someone there has been a
Veritable *dea ex machina*.

So Muses, go, the lesson clear as glass,
At everything men fail the Ladies pass.
Ah, never underestimate their power:
In college, Ladies have their finest hour.

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The Near East between East and West

CHARLES MALIK

EVERYONE TODAY IS CONCERNED about the Far East, but perhaps tomorrow the Near East may become the focal point of world interest. The Far East is "between" East and West in a somewhat accidental and transient sense; the Near East is fundamentally, essentially, permanently between East and West.*

The Near East is neither East nor West, nor a synthesis of East and West. This negative characterization is perhaps its most distinctive one. The Near East is not the East, notwithstanding the obvious presence of traces of Hindu mysticism in the Near Eastern spirit. For there are radical differences between the basic and dominant Near Eastern character, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, either the Chinese character, founded on the whole upon social, ethical and family relationships, or the Indian metaphysical-Hindu outlook, which in its typical instance tends to consider everything worldly, historical or material a mere shadow.

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This article is adapted from an address delivered at the conference on "The Great Powers and the Near East" of the Harvard Summer School, held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on August 9, 1950. The address appears as a chapter in the book, *The Near East and the Great Powers*, edited by Richard N. Frye, published September 27, 1951, by Harvard University Press. Copyright, 1951, by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

*There are a number of preliminary distinctions and definitions that one would ordinarily feel bound to make at the outset of an article such as this. However, I shall assume that it is obvious that, because of the enormous diversities in the Near East, the propositions I shall entertain apply only differentially to its various parts, and that everyone is fully aware of the political, economic and, above all, the strategic importance of the Near East.

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Nor is the Near East the West, notwithstanding the indisputable historical influence of the Near East upon the essence of the Western tradition, and the well-known impact of the West upon the Near East in medieval as well as in modern times. That the Near East, despite all this historical interaction, is not the West is the result of two phenomena.

One of these, the establishment and entrenchment of Islam, occurred in the Near East. Although Islam has a high regard for Christ, although the Virgin Mary is revered by Islam, and although there are obvious Hebrew-Christian influences in the Koran, and especially in certain phases of Sufism—yet Islam cannot be said to have taken over and adopted bodily the Christian heritage. Islam was more a substitution for, than a development and completion of, an existing system. Thus it came to be quite distinct from Western Christian spirituality. Nor was Greek thought, despite its fine interpretation by the great Moslem-Arab and Christian-Arab philosophers, ever deeply absorbed into the thinking and literature and general outlook of Arab or Moslem culture. This culture is not an authentic heir of Greek thought in the same way that European culture is. We may then say that the establishment of Islam amounted to at least a partial rejection of the West.

The second phenomenon originated in the West: it was the virtual rejection of the Near East by the West. Ever since the days of the Crusades, the West has neither felt nor made the Near East feel that the latter is part of the West, that there can be peaceful, normal relations between the two. Though all the ultimate values which the West holds sacred, and by which it is characterized, owe their origin to the Near East, the Near East has invariably been made to feel itself a stranger, an outsider, if not an enemy.

Nor is the Near East a synthesis of East and West, notwithstanding the simultaneous existence in it, in a seething, eclectic fashion, of traces and tinges of both the Eastern and the Western spirits. A genuine synthesis of East and West, one that understands, absorbs, reconciles, and rises above both, has never been accomplished—at least, not in the Near East, despite its middle geographical position.

Though all these negative determinations in themselves merely define what the Near East is not, they nevertheless point to the exist-

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ence of a Near Eastern character *sui generis*. The Near East arose and developed as an active agent struggling with both the East and the West, partly rejecting, yet partly accepting and assimilating. It was through this active confrontation, at once negative and positive, that it came into its own, became in its latest phase the Islam we know today.

In a fundamental philosophy of culture, the Near East can be shown to exemplify the category of "the between." The precise determination of this character of "betweenness" with respect to the concrete being of the Near East is a fascinating topic for responsible research.

II

I have so far referred to East and West in their traditional, more authentic acceptation. We must also inquire into the position of the Near East vis-à-vis the ideological situation of the present day. It is a false usage to employ the terms "East" and "West" with regard to the present ideological conflict. In the first place, communism would have been impossible without classical German idealism and the social and economic phenomena of early nineteenth-century British industrialism. Thus communism is a Western phenomenon, however its precise relation to the true spirit of the West may be finally determined. In the second place, I believe there is no trace of the genuine spirit of the East in Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism. In the third place, India—to take a most outstanding example—lies outside the Communist orbit, and although it refuses to be classified other than as itself, yet it is more correct to place India at least alongside the non-Communist world. I shall refer, therefore, not to a conflict between East and West, but to a confrontation of the Communist and the non-Communist worlds, where the effective agent is, in the one case, Soviet Russia and, in the other, if not the United States, then certainly the Atlantic community.

Where does the Near East stand between these two? If we have regard for the truth, I believe the following topics will have to be investigated in a thorough examination of this question:

1. A distinction must be made between the attitude of governments and the attitude of peoples, in so far as peoples are in a position to form an attitude.

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2. A distinction must be made between sheer political interest and the presence or absence of a spiritual affinity with the West or with communism: namely, between relations of expediency and relations based on a community of ideas.

3. It is commonly held that there is something in the Near East that is basically foreign to communism. From this assumption certain political cynics have concluded that the West can do almost anything it pleases with the Near East without fearing it would turn in the direction of communism. As one such cynic put it: "No matter how deep a wound we may inflict on this or that part of the Near East, and no matter how much then it might look upon us as enemies, still it would remain faithful to us, because from its point of view communism is far worse. In this instance, the maxim, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, does not apply. Therefore, we can be quite bold in our dealings with the Near East." But in order to determine the truth or falsehood of this belief, the following points must first be ascertained:

A. Whether the religious sentiment is sufficiently strong to withstand a socio-economic onslaught of the Communist type.

B. Whether communism is not resourceful enough to make use of the religious sentiment itself.

C. Whether the unrelieved, though perhaps unconscious, misery of the masses could not be awakened into conscious articulation by the Communist message, especially since the socio-economic meaning of the West has been highly ambiguous.

D. Whether the supra-nationalism of the Soviet Union (namely, the overcoming of narrow nationalism by vigorous attachment to an imperial center and by political inclusion within a vigorous imperial idea) does not appeal to a region which has known more of imperial existence than of nationalistic fragmentation.

E. Whether Communist universalism by comparison with Western particularism, especially in regard to race and culture, does not strike a responsive chord in the heart of a region whose highest creations have always been forms of spiritual and human universalism.

F. In respect to the basic categories of existence (the human

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person, reason, truth, spirit, nature, matter, force, history, love, forgiveness, the higher things, freedom, the individual, the collective, the sense of security, the sense of belonging, the possibility of difference and rebellion and non-conformity, the totalitarian idea, the Byzantine identification of temporal and spiritual power), all talk about the real relation between the Near East on the one hand, and communism or the West on the other, is pathetically superficial until the theoretical and actual places of these ultimate categories in the life of each of these three worlds are fully and responsibly determined.

I believe a carefully executed program of research based on my outline will reveal three things: (1) that the Near East is not basically opposed to communism; (2) that the West is under illusion if it supposes that there are no limits to the liberties it can take with certain parts of the Near East on the assumption that it would never, of itself, turn Communist; and (3) that, despite everything, it is perfectly possible to win the confidence of the entire Near East if the West in certain respects undergoes a real and abiding change of heart.

III

In these days the political situation in the Near East takes precedence over the social and economic; it overshadows even the religious and ideological. Certain sections of the Near East seem to be satisfied politically with respect to the West; this cannot be said of the Arab world.

Political grievances, generated by policies of the Western powers toward the Arab world, outweigh in the popular mind any ideological affinities or antipathies that may exist either between the Near East and the West or between the Near East and communism. In a situation like this, anti-Communist propaganda sounds extremely abstract and hollow, especially since communism has a more vigorous and dynamic appeal to the popular imagination than any half-hearted and unconvincing presentation of the case for democracy.

The long list of pledges voluntarily given and arbitrarily withdrawn, of divisions dug deep into the social structure, and hostilities encouraged among groups and countries, of sinister regimes estab-

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lished and upheld, of open alliances resulting in the creation of permanent threats to the Arab countries, of lost opportunities when badly needed help and guidance were simply not offered—it is these things which, casting dark shadows upon the mind of the people, will not fail to arouse deep anxieties for generations to come.

Putting aside the few political friends of the West whose friendship is based on obvious self-interest (and these are diminishing either in number or in warmth of friendship every day), the genuine Near Eastern friends of the West include some of our intellectuals who are inspired by the truer image of the authentic West. *These* friends of the West—and in view of the difficult situation under which their friendship is put to the test, they really merit the title of "friends"—are not blind to the dichotomy in the soul of the West today: the discrepancy between the deepest that the West was and is and stands for, and the tangible reality of the West as it acts, and as the symptoms of its present crisis unfold. If these friends maintain their faith; if they hold in check their understandable inclinations to doubt; if they (not without inner crises of the spirit) put aside for the time being the political grievances which they share with their countrymen—if they do all this, it is not because they feel the plight of their countries less, or care less sincerely for the destiny of their peoples. They do so because they believe that the flame of truth, justice and love at the heart of the West has not been and can never be extinguished; that the real Christian spirit, whereby the West means, or ought to mean, only to be helpful, will not fail, in God's good time, to reassert itself; and that one day the West, when it awakens to its dangers and to its possibilities, will surely redress the injustice it has visited upon the Near East. But, in the nature of the case, such unwavering friends are not many. To the overwhelming majority, the gross political realities are completely disillusioning.

IV

Let us now turn to the future. What can be done to promote a better understanding between the Near East as a whole and the West?

1. For the last one hundred fifty years, the Near East has been, in so far as its relations with the outside world are concerned, in con-

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stant and almost exclusive contact with Western Europe and America —politically, economically and culturally. This is a valuable foundation. Accordingly, what is required is not a creation *ex nihilo*, not an indiscriminate break with the past, but a qualitative transformation of attitude and policy whereby the West can justly utilize and wisely build upon this priceless heritage of interaction, despite all its unhappy aspects and episodes. The West must realize, and act on the realization, that in the end it is the one hundred million Moslems and Arabs of the Near East who are going to determine its destiny, and not any extraneous forces.

2. There are valuable democratic elements in the Near East—risen from the people, possessing a genuine sense of social responsibility, loving freedom, economic and social justice, hating autocracy, responsibly conversant with the great issues that shake the world today, and in genuine communion with the Western positive tradition. If these elements are lovingly and courageously sought and supported, they are likely eventually to help overcome the present alienation between the Near East and the West.

3. The West should have a genuine interest in the peaceful, free, independent development of political institutions in the Near East, and a conscious policy for the promotion of political stability in that region. So long as certain situations remain chronically unstable, how can the best elements plan and accept responsibility for the long pull? The region between direct, crude interference and complete unconcern is pregnant with unexplored possibilities.

4. The contact between the Near East and the West in recent decades has been characterized by conspicuous disunity in Western policy. This is the inner significance of the celebrated "Eastern Question." Thus, for instance, the Arab world is an arena of strife and jealousy among the Great Powers. Competition for the oil of the region is a major phenomenon in the world situation. Unless the Western powers harmonize, on a high level and on a long-term basis, their policies with respect to the near East, and unless in this harmonization the Near East is treated not as a means, but as an end to be respected in its own right, it is hopeless to expect stability or peaceful development in that most sensitive part of the world.

5. The joint declaration issued by the governments of France,

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the United Kingdom and the United States on May 25, 1950, seems to me to be a step in the right direction. However, it could have been made less ambiguous; that is why a great deal depends on the mode and spirit of its application. Despite all this, the response of the Arab League to it has been positive and statesmanlike, thus giving fresh evidence of the desire of the Arab world to encourage and build upon any hopeful sign of improvement in Arab-Western relations.

6. The Arab mind must be thoroughly disabused of the obsession that in certain fundamental conflicts of interest some Western powers will, in the nature of the case, always side against the Arabs. While this obsession lasts, there can be no peace and no confidence. Surely, then, a specific declaration in this regard is indicated, whereby the highest authorities assure the Arabs—and the assurance is periodically made good—that their interests will not be cyclically encroached upon.

7. There is another obvious consideration. Three important resolutions of the United Nations with respect to the Palestine problem have not been implemented, and there are no indications that any effort is being made toward that end. I refer, of course, to the resolutions regarding the frontiers, the internationalization of Jerusalem, and the fate of the one million Arab refugees. I do not believe that the wholehearted support of these measures by the United States could fail to contribute effectively toward their realization. The United States would be respecting the will of the international community, expressed in each case by more than a two-thirds majority in the United Nations. I believe that nothing can restore the confidence of the Arab world in the West so much as a straightforward support by the Western powers of the standing resolutions of the United Nations.

8. A bold policy must be devised for arming the Near East and enabling it to participate effectively in its self-defense; questions of security should be a cooperative affair. It is bad politically and morally for both parties if one of them feels it is being "protected" militarily by the other. There is a vast reservoir of manpower in the Near East which could certainly be trained to play its part in the service of world peace.

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9. There are certain outstanding questions which Egypt rightly feels should be settled. A diplomacy that aims at promoting positive understanding between the Near East and the West ought to be resourceful enough to satisfy Egypt in this regard.

10. Consider, further, the Turkish demand for inclusion in the Atlantic Treaty. Turkey feels—and, I believe, rightly—that if the Near East is important for the defense of the West, some juridical linkage ought to be established between its system of defense and that of the Atlantic community. Existing assurances in this field are important, but the exigencies of the moment make it plain that more than assurances is needed.

11. A statesmanlike application of Point Four on a large scale in the Near East is imperative. But the flow of private capital and the extension of technical assistance are not enough. In addition, public financial assistance is requisite for general economic development. The Near East is supersensitive to the attachment of political strings to economic aid. Rightly or wrongly, people believe that economic aid is primarily a means for political appeasement, i.e., for making certain sections forget their political rights and claims. This suspicion should be effectively removed.

12. Point Four for the most part aims at redressing economic and social injustice throughout the world. But, as thus conceived, it is directed only toward the means of human existence. Far more grievous than economic and social injustice is intellectual and spiritual injustice. There is the order of ends—what man should live for, what he should think, what he should believe, what he should be—about which the United States should have something to say, and for which it should have something significant to offer. It is for contributions of the heart, mind and spirit that the Near East thirsts. As long as there are millions of human beings who have never tasted peace of mind; as long as the goods of the mind and spirit are deficient in our midst; as long as the great classics of human thought and feeling, which have penetrated and transformed the life, literature and outlook of the West, are totally unheard of by large sections of the Near East, there can be no real prosperity and no genuine human well-being in that part of the world. I believe that an effort to render the finest classics of the West available to the peoples of the Near East, for their im-

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mediate use and in their own tongues, would be a potent factor in bringing about in the long run a genuine understanding between our two cultures.

V

There are grave issues at stake in the world today, issues far graver than many politicians imagine. The highest spiritual values of the last four thousand years lie in the balance today. Who knows how much in the inscrutable course of events will depend on the bringing together of the Near East and the West?

Everything depends on the strength of the West, particularly the intellectual and spiritual strength. When the West returns to its best self, our problems in the Near East will be solved—and not ours alone. When that happens, it is entirely possible that the Near East will move into a new golden period, and participate again in the creative arts of civilization. The great challenges facing it need not crush it: they may help to lift it onto a new level of achievement. Above all, its sons must learn how to put aside fruitless, hopeless suffering, which their fathers have known for generations, and how to put on the hopeful kind of suffering which, in joy, accepts everything for the sake of truth and being.

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On Translators and Translating

LEWIS GALANTIÈRE

THE PLACE OF THE TRANSLATOR in the world of thought hardly needs to be defended. People who dare to make large generalizations have claimed—I suppose with justice—that it was Alfred the Great's translations into Anglo-Saxon that saved civilization in England 1100 years ago. Everybody is at least vaguely aware that Greek science and philosophy were preserved for Christian Europe by the Semitic world, and that it was mainly in Latin translations of Arabic versions that Aristotle, some of Plato, and even Homer were read in what Haskins called the "Renaissance of the twelfth century." Better known, of course, is what Luther's translation of the Bible has meant for the German people, and what Tyndale's translation—passed on to us through the corpus of bishops who revised it—has meant for all whose language is English. Particularly in literary circles, we read and love the Elizabethan translators, but it is doubtful that the degree of their cultural influence is well known to those who teach and write English.

It was those translators, I think, who gave to Englishmen that first education in the code of the Stoics which—though it took a long time—became eventually the moral foundation of the British Liberalism which we inherit. Nobody can say what Shakespeare would have written had not Florio translated Montaigne and Golding Ovid, had North not put into English Amyot's French text of Plutarch's *Lives*, and Holland turned out his versions of Livy and Pliny and Suetonius. Machiavelli began to be translated as early as 1595; his name is so repeatedly spoken in Elizabethan drama that only a candidate for

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the doctorate quaintly called "of philosophy" would undertake to count the number of times. I suspect that Webster and Tourneur and Ford might have had quite different things to say if a man named Painter had not published, under the title *The Palace of Pleasure*, his translations from Italian storytellers.

Now the significant thing about these translations is that—with the exceptions which we must always make room for—they gave us the first readable English prose. It was from civilizations more refined than their own that the Elizabethans learned to express ideas and not merely emotions; and for the best part of a hundred years, certainly until Dryden's maturity, around 1680, no other class of English writers wrote prose that was comparable to the prose of the translators.

This fact contains a meaning so clear that I shall say only a word about it. It is plain to everybody that whereas poetry is an incantation, and requires no civilization to produce it, prose is, so to say, an anti-tribal thing, the form of expression of a civilized society, the vehicle of logic and the instrument of reason. Prose is, in one aspect, the art of preserving the amenities in the midst of disputation.

I have sometimes thought that the course of civilization in Europe could be followed by tracing in country after country the emergence of a rapid intelligible vernacular prose, a prose dealing not with fancies but with ideas, not with appetites but with thoughts. I say "vernacular" because of course all learned Europe, all administrative Europe, wrote Latin prose fluently enough until the end of the seventeenth century. It was not until 1687 that Thomasius dared, at Halle, to deliver the first university lectures pronounced in German; and I am informed that the Hungarian Parliament continued to debate exclusively in Latin into the nineteenth century. Not that vernacular prose was not written much earlier here and there: there was Alfred in Saxon England; there were the *fabliaux* and the chroniclers in France; there were the isolated instances of Meister Eckhart, Luther and Grimmelshausen in their several centuries in the Germanies. But if you remind yourself that Boccaccio, in fourteenth-century Italy, is easy to read; that we must go to the sixteenth century to find Montaigne and Rabelais; that it was not till the seventeenth century that Englishmen could write fluent prose; that most

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German prose before the eighteenth century was wretched—if you recollect that Leibniz wrote only in Latin and French, and that when he composed two small pieces exhorting his people to use the vernacular he found himself writing French words with Germanic suffixes, and not German at all; if you add to this that Mme de Sévigné was dissecting human relations in private letters at a time when Englishmen were writing from the country about the sickness of the dairymaid, and from London about the mud in the streets and bugs in the inns—if you think of all these things, you may perhaps share my impression that a mere study of prose writing will show that a civilized society appeared earlier in Italy than in France, earlier in France than in England, earlier in England than in the Germanies, and, one may add, earlier among the Germans than among the Russians. The course of poetry would not reflect anything of this kind. I am thus brought to maintain that England first owed to her translators the civilizing influence of prose—or, if you prefer it the other way round, that the translators were the first who reflected in their prose the end of barbarism and the beginning of a civilized society among the English.

There was a second great modern age of translation, this time not into English but, rather, out of English. It coincided with the first modern employment of reason for purposes of critical inquiry into things terrene as well as divine, which flourished in the seventeenth century. What happened was so curious that I think it is worth noting.

The mainstream of learning had risen in the Mediterranean and flowed northward to the Low Countries, the Germanies, and England and Scotland. Rather suddenly, before the end of the seventeenth century, it was seen that the stream had reversed itself: the flow of profound thought, of moral ideas, was coming down upon the South from the North. Holland was, of course, one of the two great sources; but as the Dutch genius of that age continued to express itself in Latin, for my purposes I ignore that source and turn to the other, the English source. For those on the Continent who recognized the importance of the new thinking, the problem was how to get all Europe to read the great florescence of English writers

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of the time: Hobbes, Berkeley, Locke; Addison, Steele and Shaftesbury; scholars like Bentley and poets like Pope, Gay and Prior; a genius, Swift, who excelled in every art. How were they to be made known to the world? (Incidentally, the world, in the sense of the reading public, was by this time no longer that of the universities buried in their Latin, but was the world of administrators, financiers, traders on 'Change, merchant bankers and merchant adventurers—the newly blossomed governing class of the bourgeoisie.)

There was for this purpose one means and one only. It was to translate things English into the French language. French had of course always been a *Weltsprache*. It had been overshadowed at the Court of France at one time by Italian, for another brief time by Spanish. But Dante's learned contemporary, Brunetto Latini, had written his encyclopedia in French. The Angevin kings of England had continued to speak it, and the language of English law had been French—at least, of a kind. Even so, the real hegemony of the French language did not begin, it seems to me, until the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War. I see the time-span of its triumph as lying between two great sets of international treaties. The Treaties of Westphalia which closed the Thirty Years' War in 1648 were the last important European treaties to be written in Latin; thereafter, such documents were drafted in French. And the Treaties of Versailles and the other suburbs of Paris signed to conclude the First World War of 1914-1918 were the first in which the English text was allowed equal validity in international law with the French. The two dates, 1648 and 1919, seem to me to mark the temporal limits of the cultural hegemony of the French in the modern world—using the term cultural in the broad sense of setting the standards of social intercourse and taste, and imposing spiritual values.

At any rate, here in the last quarter of the seventeenth century was English thought dominating the life of the age, and here was the French language about to serve as the vehicle of the propagation of English thought on the Continent. Fortunately, a corps of translators was ready to hand. As Paul Hazard put it, "One of the least expected effects of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was to furnish England with a whole tribe of intermediaries who hastened, extraordinarily, the diffusion of English writings and the extension of

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England's power."[1] He was referring of course to certain Huguenots who had been forced by Louis XIV's persecution of the Calvinists in 1685 to flee to England—among other countries of refuge. Hazard goes on: "What were these intermediaries? Not geniuses, but inquisitive minds, active spirits who met with virile courage the great challenge of exile and were not content with only the bread which nourishes the body."

Not geniuses, doubtless: who has ever called a translator a genius? But they were men of literary conscience. Thus Pierre Coste, who was in a sense their leader, wrote in the preface to his translation of John Locke, "Each time that I failed to understand a thought in English because it contained a clouded relationship between its parts —for the English are not so scrupulous as we French in these matters —I tried, after clarifying it in my own mind, to express it so lucidly in French that it would be impossible for my reader not to understand it." They were not indifferent hacks (as were, for example, the team Smollett collected later on to translate Voltaire), but men of discrimination. So Abel Boyer, translator of Addison's *Cato*, could write, "The English language, rival of the Greek and the Latin, is as fertile as it is energetic; it is the enemy of constraint. It permits of every liberty which can contribute to beauty and nobility of expression; whereas French is enervated and impoverished by refinement, always the prey of timidity and slave of usage, almost never allowing the slightest freedom and constantly excluding every happy temerity." Ricotier, a third translator, gives proof that the tribe possessed shrewdness as well as devotion when he says, "It would be a pity if these excellent works remained locked up within the confines of the British Isles. Beautiful as the English language is, French has this great advantage over it, that it is the *lingua franca* of almost all the European nations."

When we leave this period we enter upon a span of two hundred years in which we search in vain, in Western Europe, for anything like a great age of translation. I am sure that a Russian, a Hungarian, a Pole, in my place, would be able to relate marvels about translation

[1] In *la Crise de la conscience européenne, 1680-1715*. Paris. 135. I, 91.

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into his language—and a Japanese of the past hundred years the same. For myself, I know only of isolated examples of great or ambitious translation after the middle of the eighteenth century. Everybody has heard of the miraculous Tieck-Schlegel transfusion of Shakespeare into the German literary body. My own reading and experience lead me to the extravagant opinion that German must be the easiest language to translate into, as it is the most irritating language to translate out of. This may be the reason that Coleridge's Schiller is unworthy of the original and Carlyle's *Wilhelm Meister* is, like Carlyle's hero worship, beneath contempt.

But these great names remind me that whatever the scorn in which translators themselves be held by the public—and, alas, the publishers—the craft of translation has been honored by some of the highest names in literature. Erasmus was not above it. Goethe translated Diderot, and how many other writers! Shelley (and, of course, Coleridge) did not disdain it. And there was, among others, Gide. I recall something he said a quarter-century ago which delighted me: Every good writer owes it to his country to translate at least one good foreign work. I commend that thought to my betters.

What, now, shall I say about translation itself? The truth is, I have many times thought of writing about translation, but I could never make a start because I could never think of anything that would satisfy the general reader's curiosity. There are certain tricks of the trade, but who can care except another translator? Certain minor triumphs could be mentioned, but who is interested? Not even another translator. Who cares about certain whopping mistranslations: the jokes are strictly donnish in kind.

How insignificant the subject is, I cannot better indicate than by saying that there is no article upon it in the *Britannica*. There is, however, an article on Textual Criticism, and in it I found this phrase by the great Postgate which could stand as the text of a sermon on translation: "The textual critic has no concern with what the writer ought to have thought or said; his business is solely with what he did say or think."

So it is with the translator. It is not his business to treat his author as if he were a D.P., feed him up and dress him in better clothes. Very

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early, when I published my first translation (I believe it was in 1924), I had somewhat the notion enunciated by Postgate, though I phrased it differently. I said to myself that the translator ought to produce a work which would make upon the reader of his translation the same impact as that made by the original text upon its reader.

Even today, that does not seem to be a bad standard. Let me tell you what becomes of it in practice.

If every text offered a translator by a publisher were a work of the highest art, there would be nothing in the way of attempting to respect my dictum—as, for example, Leonard Bacon has so miraculously done in his version of *The Lusiads*. But the greater part of the writings that we translate for public sale are not works of art. All contain some clumsiness of expression, some defective syntax, some illogic, some unsuspected errors of taste and—in "non-fiction"—of fact.

What is the translator to do? If he reproduces those flaws he is called a poor translator, a fellow clearly incapable of writing English. So—the translator cleans up the syntax, introduces a modicum of logic, sends the once gawky expression tripping gracefully across the page; and in the whole wide world nobody—not the author, not the publisher, not the book critic, knows the difference. Even the translator's wife (or husband) soon tires of being shown with indignation examples of the author's ineptitude, and, with self-righteousness, examples of the translator's genius.

A once-famous *traductrice* of a century ago, the "beautiful but stately" Mrs. Sarah Austin, of whom it was said that she "did much to make the best minds of Germany familiar to Englishmen," wrote, "It has been my invariable practice, as soon as I have engaged to translate a work, to write to the author of it, announcing my intention, and adding that if he has any correction, omission, or addition to make, he might depend on my paying attention to his suggestions."

My own experience of a quarter-century does not incline me to this generous scruple—quite the contrary. An invitation to an author to tidy up his work before you translate it is an invitation to the man to rewrite his book week by week while you are at work on it, and to force you, working against time and at a hack's wage, to rewrite your translation week after week to suit his changes of mood. The

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translator is not the servant of his author; he is the servant of his author's book; and that, in most cases, given the syntactical negligence, shall we say, to which most authors are subject, is servitude enough.

Is translating an art? Certainly not in the creative sense of summoning demons from the vasty deep of mind and soul. But the translator can be an artist in the sense that the violinist or the pianist is one; in the sense, that is, of recreating the form and content of thought and emotion, and making them accessible to people who in the one case do not read the foreign language and in the other do not play the musical instrument. There is, of course, the physical difference between translator and pianist, what is called the "technique" of piano-playing; but that is the juggler side, the acrobat side of piano-playing; if it were all, we should have to call jugglers and acrobats artists—and we don't, we call them *artistes*.

Except for one or two plays and a small book, it is about ten years since I have done any translation; but I may say that I have had considerable experience, since my name is on twenty-odd books as translator. Even so, I have never been able to make up my mind that I belonged to this "school" of translators or that. In a small way, these schools wrangle just as schools wrangled over Ancients versus Moderns in the seventeenth century. Goethe, characteristically, took a prudent line. He wrote, "There are two maxims of translation," and then, having said what they were (either turn the foreign author into a native author, or induce the reader to go out to the author's foreignness) he left the question in the air by adding, "The advantages of both are sufficiently well known to all interested persons from masterly examples." Two Englishmen who refused to remain on Olympian heights and descended into the arena ought to be cited. Samuel Butler, a vivid and in some ways wonderful translator of *The Odyssey* (I am assured), put it this way: "The genius of the language into which a translation is being made is the first thing to be considered." Browning, on the other hand, who presumably knew Greek as well as Butler did, and perhaps knew the resources of the English language even better than Butler, took the contrary view: "I should require [the translator] to be literal at every cost save that

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of absolute violence to our language. I would be tolerant . . . of even a clumsy attempt to furnish me with the very turn of each phrase in as Greek a fashion as English will bear."

It ought to be easy, after long experience, to take sides in the debate: I assure you, it isn't. Though I incline to Butler's side, yet I remind myself that I don't know what is meant by "the genius of the language." Does it mean the genius of English as it is found in the Elizabethan translators? Does it mean the kind of English used by a translator of the Bible named Harwood who began the story of the Prodigal Son with the words, "A gentleman in easy and almost opulent circumstances had two sons"? Does it require me to delight in a recent version of *The Iliad* so "easy to read" that not one of its sentences stirs the bowels of compassion and makes us aware that *The Iliad* is at bottom a tragedy cast in cantos instead of acts?

On the other hand, when Browning equated literalness with "as Greek a fashion as English can bear," did he reflect that to be literal may be to be clumsy without being in the least Greek—or German, say? Rarely do we find a line like Goethe's *Schoen war ich auch, und das war mein Verderben* to be put instantly into the same word-sequence and rhythm: "Fair was I too, and that was my undoing." Does the literal translation, "My peace of mind is gone," convey the Germanness of *Meine Ruh' ist hin?* Will literalness give you the Frenchness of Michelet's *Dernière levée de la France, légion imberbe, sortie à peine des lycées et du baiser des mères;* or of Bossuet's *La religion s'intéresse à ses infortunes, la ville royale s'émeut, et Rome même menace?* Professor Panofsky had a bit of fun a couple of years ago with the idea of "translation by robot" propounded by one of those worshipers of "science"[2] who fill so large a place on the horizon of American education. He proposed that the mechanical scholar translate, *Die Tauben werden den Ton des letzten Gerichtes hoeren.* Word for word, the German may be rendered either, "The deaf shall hear the sound of the Last Judgment," or, "The pigeons shall hear the clay of the last dish." (Actually, there are eight variables.)

[2] With whom I am tempted to assimilate Professor Donald J. Lloyd, of Wayne University, author of "Snobs, Slobs and the English Language," in the Summer, 1951, number of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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And yet, having said so much, I confess that I have more than once been impatient of free translations—to the point of believing, as regards Dante, that we shall never have a better English text than the prose versions printed in the bilingual volumes of Dent's "Temple Classics." Perhaps the discussion will make more sense to you if I move to it another terrain. Neither Butler nor Browning would be entirely wrong if we agreed that what the reader demands of a translator will depend upon the use he wishes to make of the translation. If what we want is to read for pleasure (and incidental humanistic instruction) then the work ought to be readable, ought to be couched in a syntax consonant with the genius of our language; and Browning's "clumsy attempt" is absolutely inadmissible. If what we are after is to get close to the genius of the author and his culture, then we cease to read for "mere" pleasure and read narrowly for instruction; and in that case we want the translator to follow Browning's precept; we want the best possible trot.

If I were asked what qualities are needed for the commercial practice of this craft, this minor art, I should answer by setting down the following, in the order of their importance:

First, the love of one's own language and the ability to express oneself economically in a variety of its forms.

Secondly, a broad general culture, without which the translator will not be able to get inside the skin of his author—and of his characters, if the work is fiction.

Thirdly, a sound knowledge of the foreign language—and, in non-academic works, of the life and culture of the nation to which the author belongs.

These are in effect "technical" prerequisites. Over and above them there is required a kind of character—a scruple, a capacity for taking pains, a patience in working out the author's meaning, a horror of the slipshod and the superficial, and a prodigious alertness of mind. Like the critic, the translator must be awake at every instant. (It is to be taken for granted, of course, that the reader, like the concert-goer, lends only about half his mind to what is going on.) Especially for one who knows a foreign language well, translation of prose can very easily become mechanical work inducing a state of euphoria,

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as it were, in which the mind is only half engaged and out of which the mind is jerked from time to time only by an awkward phrase or a single unfamiliar word. There is a constant temptation (particularly when the original is fluently written, and the translator possesses a thorough knowledge of the language he is translating out of) to work as if one were a stenographer transcribing her notes. The translator's eyes and mind are likely to be more on the original than on his own text—whereas his mind must be, above all, on what he is setting down.

This dictum, I believe, is valid for both kinds of translation: the kind whose aim is to absorb the foreign writer into the translator's own literature, and the kind intended to place before the native reader the genius of a foreign tongue and a foreign culture.

I shall stop before someone suggests that Browning ought to ask, "Does my English version give me the feeling which the Greek gave to an ancient Athenian?"

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Harsh Honey

BERNICE SLOTE

I know that time:
The gray stone where we sat . . . the umber-honed
And scarlet day that weighed upon us . . . burned-
Aster blue and crimson rust: the bronze-
Buzz fumbled in the garden's death.
Intent on self, before a snow-lime
Pit consume identity, the blooms
Entombed harsh honey in their ragged dust.
That time
(the gray stone cold
Beneath us, October like slow yellow wine,
The crazy bee rewinding summer on
A thread of scent), knowing as we did
In fall, that latest flowers lose sweetness, hold
In spinster-way no love for probing need,
We had to let the bee discover for himself,
That cold:
(the blue-burned flowers,
The uncharitable house of private loves too late
For home). It is a harsh and rusty date,
But love must hive a little frost from bronze
And battered stems for hunger's utter need;
Hold the amber honey of the lighted hours
That fall within a secret room . . . the bee,
And the bitterfasting hearts of final flowers.

✪ Assistant professor of English at the University of Nebraska, BERNICE SLOTE has received two Hopwood awards in poetry. Her poems have appeared in the *Sewanee Review*, the *Western Review*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Contemporary Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *New Mexico Quarterly*, the *Yale Review*, and other magazines.

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Television: How Bad Can It Be?

MAHONRI SHARP YOUNG

IN AN AMERICAN SCHOLAR FORUM three years ago I wrote that "television is visibly taking over where radio left off, as you can see by watching the antennas change the urban landscape." The change has spread to the tallest building in the world, making it two hundred feet taller, and on the receiving end has become so important that the damage to home aerials was among the most important effects of the Great Storm of 1950 in the Eastern states. After the war, we spoke of television as Mr. Five Years Hence. The five years seem to have gone.

While men of the older, radio generation are saying that they would not have a set in the house, their children are seeing to it that they do. Even if you have no set, you can have a false aerial on the roof. A recent advertisement by a part of the industry, since repudiated by the rest, asked, in effect, whether your child was ashamed? For these are the children who stare at the viewer for an average of four hours a day, every day, which is more time than they spend in school, and at a considerably higher interest level.

But let us not blame it all on the children, for men seem to be even more enthusiastic than the American housewives, who bore the blame for radio's daytime serials. The fascination is so great that it looks as though there were a gene which is specifically attracted to television. What was anticipated was an interest akin to that which people take in radio and the movies; what happened was something which, in the rueful phrase of the president of the American Broadcasting Company, threatens to turn us into a nation with eyeballs as big as cantaloupes and no brains at all.

Is this to be the end result of what enthusiasts call the greatest in-

✪ MAHONRI SHARP YOUNG took part with Lyman Bryson in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR FORUM, "Radio in America," in the Spring, 1949, number.

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vention since Gutenberg? Its superiority as a medium (if the picture will stand steady) is so great that people would rather look at *any* television program than listen to their favorite radio program; box office receipts indicate that they prefer *any* movie on their set to the best at their neighborhood playhouse. Technically television is superb, and rapidly improving. There is only one flaw: programming is much worse than anyone could have imagined or intended.

Not only is television's programming atrocious—it is having a harmful effect on other media, which were under sufficiently heavy strain already. Perhaps the most startling instance has been its catastrophic effect upon music in radio. The NBC orchestra, by a narrow margin, was saved for this last season by a new sponsor and a great conductor. But this instance should not obscure what has happened to the New York Philharmonic, shunted to the dinner hour and presented in recording, and to other symphony organizations. Not only has there been a net cultural loss for the general public, but there is grave concern among musicians about employment, for the future of "live" music on the air is not bright. Moreover, until the Korean War broke out, it was increasingly difficult to secure sponsors for news and commentaries; discussions and panels are now suffering similar debility. The cause is primarily the siphoning off of more and more advertising and network money into the inordinately expensive new medium.

It is estimated that a full coast-to-coast television system will call for an advertising expenditure, on television alone, greater than the total present advertising expenditure on radio, newspapers and magazines. Radio advertising has been more and more concentrated upon those shows which are supposed to deliver the largest segment of the presumably dwindling audience, while the networks have been too much concerned about their television deficits to pay much attention to sustaining shows on the older medium. In the rush of the advertising agencies and their "accounts" to secure a place and—even more important—a *time* in television, much that was valuable in radio is in danger of being lost. For if the objection to radio has always been that it did not do more of what it did supremely well, the trouble with television, so far, is that it presents almost nothing in which it excels.

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The harmful effects upon the movies are less obvious and are for the most part still to come, but already there are signs of a drawing off of audience—despite the fact that "business is bad in Hawaii," where there is no television—of technicians, and of talent. The shape of the future is discernible in the fact that television is now using 25 per cent of all film raw stock. It is expected that the defection of personnel will become a mass desertion when the cables and the relays reach Hollywood. But the underlying danger is the same as in radio: that the studios, in the desperate attempt to retain as much as possible of the shrinking audience, will concentrate upon those "popular" types of pictures which were keeping people over thirty away from the theaters long before television was a threat.

While other media seem to shrink, television advances by leaps and bounds—if leaps be considered as new cities tied into the grid, and the bounds be measured by millions of sets sold. The telephone company hopes to complete the link to the coast by the end of the year, and already the great population centers of the East and Middle West are joined together in a web which must rank, as a communications achievement, with major feats of road and railroad building. Set manufacturing has become an important industry, which would have served as a spark plug for the national economy, if one had been needed. Restriction of production this year to a mere five million units has been no more unwelcome than similar controls to the automobile industry. Hitherto, the only brake upon expansion has been the Federal Communications Commission's ban upon new station construction, in effect since the fall of 1948.

This prohibition, of course, was not the whim of power-crazed bureaucrats. It derived from engineering reasons of a compelling nature: a greater interference between stations than had been anticipated, and the necessity of opening up a whole new range of the spectrum to allow for future building needs. That television should have gone so far so fast under this hobbling restriction is a further tribute, if one were needed, to its vitality; yet it now faces the possibility that even when the freeze is lifted construction of new stations may be blocked by defense priorities.

The industry has also been harassed recently by an FCC decision in the controversial field of color. After long deliberation, the de-

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cision was awarded to the Columbia Broadcasting System's device, which had the advantage of being ready, and the disadvantage of being non-compatible—i.e., it cannot be received in black and white by present sets without an adapter. This threat to the dominant manufacturing interests (CBS, as opposed to Du Mont and the Radio Corporation of America, parent of NBC, has not hitherto been active in the profitable set business) has been bitterly contested. The decision in favor of Columbia has now been sustained by the Supreme Court. However, the whole color controversy may also be rendered academic by defense considerations.

The present method of transmission by means of coaxial cable, radio relays and local stations, operates under the twin disabilities of high cost and short range. Even when the long lines are all completed, a great deal of the area of the country, if not of the population, will be beyond the fifty-mile range of a local station. From its beginnings, the present method has been threatened, in theory at least, by Stratovision, an arrangement by which programs would be re-broadcast from airplanes flying at maximum altitude: since the range of the wave is line-of-sight to the horizon, a handful of planes could blanket the entire country. Some of the inherent difficulties will suggest themselves to anyone who has ever been grounded; and there is, by now, the kind of entrenched opposition which is rarely dislodged.

The other active alternative to the prevailing system relies upon economic rather than technical factors, and its several manifestations may be grouped together as "payvision." It is based upon the payment of a fee by subscribers, in return for which they receive, by means of an unscrambling device, programs which cannot be picked up by the ordinary set. Two versions have been tested on a limited scale, one in New York and one in Chicago, with results which were inconclusive and are now the subject of argument. Many present critics place their hope and their faith in this kind of service, yet it is not hard to foresee that these devices will encounter difficulty in securing consumer acceptance. For one thing, they lack radio's greatest attraction, the getting something for nothing, and even if they can take this hurdle they will run into major program difficulties. For what can they offer their audiences that could not be supplied by the networks? Newer movies, exclusive sports events?

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They would be competing in a very high-cost market. They lack the one great appeal of subscription radio—music. And subscription radio, despite its lower cost and the best efforts of Senator Benton, never got beyond the prospectus stage.

A great deal is expected of large-screen television, particularly by movie theater owners, who are understandably concerned as to what they are going to do with their great halls, which during the first part of the century covered the land like a white robe of churches. The investment in theaters accounts for most of the net worth of the industry, and Hollywood is as much a branch of the real estate business as radio is of advertising. It is not easy for outsiders to share their enthusiasm, for they face the same program difficulties and the same network competition as payvision. Except for the possibility of three-dimensional presentation, it is hard to see what they could offer on a large screen that is not now offered on a small.

Further in the future, we can see such things as inter-continental television, for, technologically speaking, there now appear to be no insurmountable barriers. In electronics, as in some other fields of industrial research, it is now possible to place a firm order, with delivery date, for improvements which have not yet been made. On the basis of present performance, intercontinental television might seem to be at best a minor nuisance, but to Dr. Allen B. Du Mont it is "the glory road to peace and understanding. . . . An International Board of Arbitration will probably be formed to secure free interchange of program material. By 1960, its policies and procedures will have become sufficiently established and accepted by all nations of good will so that they will represent a force of sufficient power to suppress belligerency in other countries and suppress war." (*Variety*, January 3, 1951)

But we cannot afford to wait ten years. The next decade is crucial. The present decline of television standards is not in preparation for an advance. This is disaster. Programwise—and aside from its ingeniousness as a toy, that is all that is important about television—program-wise, television makes radio look like the Golden Age, which it wasn't. A week-long monitoring of the seven New York stations by the National Association of Educational Broadcasters showed that drama, mostly crime and Westerns, took up 25 per cent

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of viewing time; variety, another 14 per cent; commercials, another 10. The other half of the time was devoted to a hodge-podge of sports (10 per cent); home-making (16 per cent); children's programs (12 per cent—"We could tell it was for children when an actor came out in Western clothes and said, 'You kiddies all ready to see our next feature?' "), and music (4 per cent—"no serious music, no light music, just popular music"). Public events took up 1 per cent, public issues 2 per cent, information 3 per cent. In judging content, it should be remembered that this survey dealt only with time on the air, and did not concern itself with such matters as audience size and desirability of schedule time. Nor did it consider program quality aside from type, or how much of the offering was old, tired film.

It might be contended that this poverty of programming is a product of the youth of the industry, which has had to put so much of the energy into physical expansion that it has not been able to pay much attention to artistic or cultural quality, yet the history of other mass media does not bear out this contention. The quality of movies and radio did not improve through the years. In television, cost factors work strongly against the public interest and exert enormous pressure on broadcasters to sell every possible hour at the highest possible price. Time periods now occupied by superior but unsponsored shows are for sale to the first advertiser whose offerings will swell the totals of crime, Westerns and variety. These periods are being sold very fast; one network now has no available evening time.

Pursued by high and rising costs, the broadcasters cannot act otherwise. Three-quarters of the station owners are owners of radio stations, while the networks are the radio networks, with a new one added. The men in control have no desire to do worse than they did in radio. But they are primarily men of business. This time, the blame for poor content cannot be shifted to the advertising agencies, for network control of television programming is almost absolute.

The only check upon the activities of the broadcasters is exerted by the FCC, whose position might be compared to that of a bureau of mines in a gold rush. Nevertheless, when properly aroused, the Commission can do a great deal. It now appears to be fully aware of the disastrous implications of the present situation in television, and

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there is talk of a *Blue Book*, with program standards which would be enforced. With considerable support within the Commission, particularly from Miss Frieda Hennock, the National Association of Educational Broadcasters has succeeded in having 10 per cent of the remaining television channels reserved for educational use. Needless to say, the broadcasters, however serious their internal differences may be, have banded together to fight this threat. The whole episode helps one to understand the process by which, in the past, the government or the people could allow other resources of the continent to be alienated.

The broadcasters' trade association was perhaps unfortunate in its lead-off witness at the hearings on the reservation of channels. Dr. Kenneth H. Baker, their director of research, made rather sweeping statements to the effect that "the educators' experience with radio has been a dismal failure" and that "educators as a group have not evidenced the willingness nor the competence in using radio that would justify the reservation to them of any part of the broadcast spectrum." (New York *Times*, January 26, 1951) He stated that the educational effect of Westerns had been proved, and that he considered crime drama and variety shows educational. Other industry witnesses were more reasonable, as was the wolf with Little Red Riding Hood. They suggested that educational institutions buy time from commercial stations; they pointed to the danger that the reservation might result in non-use, which would waste spectrum space. Blandly, they asked for the rest of the pie, on the grounds that other people did not know how to eat.

Now, it is perfectly true that the record of the educators in radio has not been brilliant, and that they might not be able to utilize the proposed channels immediately. Costs are so high that only wealthy institutions could use the opportunity, but the same thing is true of the proposal to buy time, with the added difficulty that it is impossible to buy time which is already sold. Perhaps the crux of the matter lies in the industry's objection that the channels, once set aside, might not be used. This would mean that some part of the spectrum would be held open for future experiment, since it is almost impossible to expropriate a profitable business. It would allow room for payvision, for subsidized stations, and for the public corporation sug-

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gested last year by *R. W. Emerson, secundus,* in an AMERICAN SCHOLAR editorial.

For it can hardly be maintained that the existing situation is ideal, or even tolerable. Television's social impact may have been overemphasized by scare surveys, and its potentialities as an art form may have been exaggerated—Mr. Gilbert Seldes, for instance, believes that it is peculiarly fitted to convey factual truth. Surveys are apt to survey the surveyor, and art depends mainly upon artists. But influences, though they are hard to measure, exist; and it would not seem the part of wisdom to leave this rather explosive force entirely in the hands of business broadcasters.

By its own concepts of "mass entertainment" and "giving the public what it wants," the industry as it exists today is debarred from rendering adequate service to the adult majority of the country. Those industry apologists, academic and otherwise, who argued that the people got the radio they deserved, must feel that the public has degenerated notably and rapidly, since television quality is so much worse. It might be feared that television, left to itself, would produce a public in its own image. Fortunately, as teachers know, the effect of human communication is never total, and usually indirect. If allowed to continue along its present path, the industry will condemn itself to a low-level minority service whose chief result will be an increasing distrust of all mass media.

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Clay for Chinaware
(Dachau)

A Dramatic Monologue

I. L. SALOMON

Observe the perfect ear
anatomic in design
on every teacup; note
the flawless lucent throat;
the beaming gold-rimmed line;
the texture, white and clear;

and how the rose and leaf
and thorny gnarls bestow
an air of liveness to
the porcelain; the hue
is like the transfused glow
of human flesh. In brief,

the plasma in the clay
involves the porous sill
as fluent lymph the blood.
Unlock the watered mud
and loam is miracle,
auspicious in decay!

You spurn our myths; but must
our craftsmanship be spurned?
Skill of eye and mind,
not hand alone, refined
Teutonic art interned
in imbricated crust.

(*over*)

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So they were Jews, whose earth
rotted, whose stink made rich
this ditch of cemetery.
It's hate we had to bury!
Chinaware or Jew! Which
has a minuscule of worth?

This enterprise is bread,
and not the rankling dole.
If orders call a halt,
feed us by default,
deny the heart its sole
ichorous fountainhead!

Still *no!* Then you refuse
to let us live our lives?
By The Lord Saviour Christ,
the merchandise is priced
so that a body thrives!
Germans we are—not Jews!

Then, pardon! We will close;
we'll bar the door tonight.
Right now? It can be now,
but first, my friend, see how
frail china in sunlight
reflects the teacup's rose!

✪ I. L. SALOMON's poetry and criticism have appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *Saturday Review of Literature*, *Commentary*, the *American Mercury*, *Tomorrow* and other publications.

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American Scholar Forum . . . . . .

In this number, the FORUM *is devoted to a single article. Its great length (in terms of the usual run of* AMERICAN SCHOLAR *articles) meant that we could only print it in the double-column pages of the* FORUM. *In view of the department's being given over in this way to a single article, we are planning to continue the present subject in the* FORUM *for the Winter number with shorter pieces by various contributors.*
—EDITOR

DO YOU KNOW THE NATURE OF AN OATH?

HOWARD MUMFORD JONES

LAST OCTOBER I RECEIVED A TELEGRAM FROM the chairman of the English department of the southern branch of the University of California, commonly known as U.C.L.A. and attractively situated in Westwood in Los Angeles, not very far from the great Huntington Library in San Marino. This telegram asked whether I would be interested in accepting appointment to their summer faculty in 1951.

Since 1949 the University of California has been struggling in the coils of a situation which took initial shape when the Board of Regents decided to impose upon the faculty a so-called loyalty oath. Members of the faculty had already sworn to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of California. The latter constitution prescribes an oath of the type usual for state officials—that is, they solemnly promise to support the Constitution and faithfully to discharge their duties; and it then adds: "And no other oath, declaration, or test, shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust." This language seems plain and clear; but the Regents, who had usually been of the opinion that a university professorship is neither a public office nor a public trust, decided that an additional oath was to be required of members of the University faculty and that they had the power to require it. They therefore instituted what is known as a loyalty oath, of their own devising.

This oath required the subscriber to swear that he does not believe in, and is not a member of, any party or organization that believes in, advocates, or teaches the overthrow of the United States government by force or violence. Such, at any rate, was the original form of this purgative declaration, which has been modified in the course of two unhappy years. As no member of the faculty was a member of any such party or organization, many professors refused to

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sign a statement so unnecessary and humiliating. The dispute began.

The Regents at one time agreed that a faculty committee should investigate the cases of those who could not for conscientious reasons take this oath. Such a committee was appointed; it investigated the cases of some thirty-nine members of the University Senate; if found not the slightest trace of communism or of an interest in communism in any of them or in any other faculty member; and it so reported through the President to the Regents. The President and the committee joined in recommending that the thirty-nine be kept in the employ of the University. On July 22, 1950, the Regents accepted this proposal and, as members of the group of thirty-nine rightly assumed, they thereby entered into a contractual engagement with each of them, keeping him on as a member of the faculty. But on August 25, 1950, largely at the instigation of Regent J. F. Neylan, that board reversed itself, and, demanding that the thirty-nine professors sign the oath, in effect discharged the very men they had retained a month earlier. Twenty of the thirty-nine thereupon sued the Regents for reinstatement, on the ground that a contract enforceable at law had been entered into in July, which could not thus be arbitrarily broken in August. Among this group—later reduced to eighteen—are some of the most distinguished members of the California faculty. The courts have since ruled in their favor.

When I received my telegram in October, I at once consulted two or three members of the California faculty who happened to be in Cambridge at the time. In the light of their advice and in the hope of enforcing the truth that contracts made in good faith cannot be arbitrarily terminated, I declined appointment at U.C.L.A. in a telegram which read as follows and which, again after advising with California friends, I released to the newspapers.

"In view of the good repute of the University of California until recently, and especially in view of the unique opportunities for scholarly research in the Los Angeles area, I am strongly drawn to your offer of a visiting summer-term professorship in 1951. I hope this offer can be renewed under happier circumstances. But until your Board of Regents ceases to violate the ordinary principles of academic tenure and honest agreement between parties to a contract, I cannot in good conscience accept. In view of the condemnation of the unparalleled action of your Board by professional bodies and groups of scholars and scientists over the country, I am regretfully taking the liberty of making this reply public."

The National Association of Psychologists had already condemned the action of the Regents and had urged that no member of their association accept a post at California until tenure conditions improve. Similar action had been taken by the International Association of Mathematicians, meeting in Cambridge in September. Since that time, eighteen learned bodies have similarly condemned the action of the Regents, and, according to a report of the Committee on Academic Freedom of the northern branch of the University of California, some 1,200 professors over the nation representing some forty colleges and universities have vigorously insisted that until tenure conditions are altered in the University of California, they must condemn the action of the Regents. Thirty-seven members of the California faculty, in addition to the original group, have left the University in protest; fifty-five courses have had to be dropped from the curriculum because there is no one to teach them; and forty-seven persons have refused appointment at that institution, including people as well known as Robert Penn Warren, the novelist, and Rudolf Carnap, the philosopher.

It is now canonical for me to state that I am not a member of the Communist party, that I have never been a member of the Communist party, that I have no intention of becoming a member of the Communist party, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I am not now, I have not been, nor do I intend to become, a stooge for the Communist party. I have belonged at one time or another to random organizations which have since been called subversive,

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though I think I belong to no such organizations now, but in this connection it is important to observe that if you are of the liberal persuasion, if you want to accomplish some particular reform, and if you create an organization looking toward this purpose, you are commonly helpless as an individual to prevent anybody else from joining the organization; you are helpless to prevent somebody or other, in office or out, from calling such an organization subversive; and by and by you discover that sooner or later somebody finds this slur a convenient device for killing the liberal movement. I am also compelled to point out that as a matter of law the Communist party is a legal organization, that as a matter of principle the American Association of University Professors refuses to accept the theory that membership in any lawful political organization is *ipso facto* sufficient reason for discharging a professor, and that, in view of the express denial by officials of the American Communist party that they advocate the overthrow of the government by either force or violence, the courts have as yet reached no clear decision as to whether the overthrow of the government by force or violence is *ex hypothesi* an essential purpose of the American Communists. It may be; it may not be: we do not yet now. All we know is that we are living in an atmosphere surcharged with emotional violence. I repeat, however, that I am not a Communist, have not been a Communist, and do not intend to become a Communist. I believe that there are sincere Communists as well as hypocritical ones. What is more important than these observations, however, is the disturbing fact that almost anybody who discusses loyalty oaths, academic tenure, and intellectual freedom nowadays has to go through the ritual of disowning his membership in a particular party. It is also disturbing that I feel under some compulsion to say that I have several times taken an oath to support the Constitution of the United States and of some one of the several commonwealths wherein I have earned my pedagogical bread, either as a state employee or as the employee of a private corporation such as the President and Fellows of Harvard College. I used the word "employee" in this connection because the question whether a professor in a state university is *ipso facto* a public official is much in dispute. I say I find the necessity of saying that I have sincerely taken these oaths a disturbing necessity, for the reason that there are certain qualities in character or personality or training or whatever you want to call it, especially among professional men, that ought to be taken for granted—that, indeed, must be taken for granted if our society is to survive. One of these is elementary honor; and the fact that the code of honor is occasionally violated seems to me no more reason for imposing oaths and breaking contracts than the fact that marriage occasionally fails is a reason for requiring every bride to swear an oath that she is virtuous. However, let me return to my narrative.

The release of my telegram to the newspapers resulted in some small notoriety and an increase in my mail. The signed letters I received, especially those from the University of California, were laudatory and grateful. Letters from anonymous or unknown correspondents were of a different order. Here is the text of a postcard I received:

"well I hope we can offer you Rope to tie Around your Neck before we can offer you an Apportunity to Teach Communism here in Westwood. We have enough Comies here without You. Stay to Hell out of Here. Thee Yids need You where you are We have enough nuts here Now."

You will note the latent anti-Semitism in this communication.

Here is a second note: "To a Russia Firster: Thank God! The loyalty Oath has kept *another* '*fellow traveler*' out of U.C. L.A. My son and daughter are both graduates of U.C.L.A. and we all know that *university* is or *was* lousy with 'reds' before the loyalty oath was instituted. Harvard's Felix Frankfurter turned out packs of Alger Hisses. Me—I am for the U.S."

A third letter declares that not merely all Harvard professors, but all professors the country over are Reds and radicals. And so on.

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Even if one could, it is useless to reply to such communications. It is, for example, vain to point out that if the University of California is, or was, "lousy with reds," the Regents have so far been unable to discover a single member of the Communist party among the faculty of that institution. It is equally useless to say that Mr. Justice Frankfurter has proved to be one of the more conservative members of the Supreme Court, or to underline the obvious truth that the guilt or innocence of Alger Hiss has nothing whatever to do with the action of the Regents of the University of California in breaking their contracts with the professors. It is likewise idle to insist that my refusal to go to the University of California was meant primarily as a rebuke to the violation of contract and of academic tenure by the Regents, and only secondarily as a protest against loyalty oaths, inasmuch as, if I had accepted the offer, I should have sworn to uphold the Constitution of California and of the United States if that were expected of me. I think the movement for loyalty oaths is hysterical, and I think it does nothing whatever to check communism and a great deal to check free discussion, but like most of the others who have rebuked the Regents of the University of California, my rebuke is primarily for their breaking engagements with honorable men who were not Communists and who had never been supposed to be Communists, but who were discharged from their posts for the sin of academic disobedience.

The language of these communications, the emotions they reveal, the impulse which leads their writers to send anonymous letters through the mail are, to my way of thinking, far more ominous for the future of this country than any threat offered by the diminishing band of American Communists. We have here something like mass contagion, a kind of hysteria. It threatens the free play of discussion, the free life of the mind. But it is the free play of discussion, it is the free life of the mind, to which our educational institutions are dedicated. The emotions revealed in this situation result in the passage of legislation as confused as the McCarran Act, despite the carefully reasoned veto message of the President of the United States, a veto message compounded from the considered opinions of the Department of Justice, the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Department of State, all of them advising the President that the bill would seriously hurt the intelligence operations of these agencies, would not harm communism, and would harm our relations with other countries, notably in the matter of the interchange of scholars, scientists and artists among the nations of the world in the spirit both of the United Nations and of UNESCO. Recent attempts to amend the act are mere palliative measures, which in some sense make the situation worse, since they throw an improper judicial responsibility upon American consulates.

However, I am straying from the point. The increasing belief that loyalty oaths either produce or prove loyalty is one of the most remarkable phenomena of the last twenty-five years. The position of those who demand that loyalty oaths be imposed —usually upon other people—is simple, and emotionally understandable. They argue that not only public officials but any other important class of persons supposed to be influential—air-raid wardens, doctors, lawyers, librarians, teachers and the like—should take such an oath or leave their posts or their business. The theory is simple. The Constitution, state or federal, requires public officials to take an oath of office, doesn't it? Even Mr. Truman has to swear or affirm that he will faithfully execute his office and to the best of his ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution. Do you think you're better than the president? If you're not a Red, why do you object to taking an oath? Aren't you a patriotic American? Why are you ashamed to prove you're loyal? Do you think we're going to entrust education (or the courts, or wounded boys in hospitals, or radio programs, or television, or public libraries) to disloyal Commies? People who might use the opportunity to overthrow the government by force or violence, or corrupt our youth, or mislead the voters, or distribute seditious literature, or promulgate atheism?

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Passing over the fact that in the whole history of the United States nobody has ever seriously tried to overthrow the government by force or violence—the Civil War, you will recall, was fought by the South quite honestly as a defense measure against force and violence exerted by the government of President Lincoln; passing over the curious truth that it is not the force and violence of the Communists or the Fascists or the Nazis that is to be feared in the first instance, but rather fraud—Hitler was, unfortunately, as much the legal chancellor of Germany as ever Bismarck was—we may note that this kind of thinking has a strong emotional appeal. The nation wants security. A psychology of fear is abroad. People are uneasy, and it seems to quiet their uneasiness if they can force other persons to take oaths. What is disturbing in this situation is that this apprehensiveness, this feeling that the Communist party or some other organization is somehow threatening our security, springs from a profound, widespread and popular distrust of democracy. It assumes that very few persons are to be trusted, that average human nature is corrupt, that men are more likely to be treasonable than loyal, corrupt than honest, conspiratorial than open, evil than good. The fact that the whole history of the United States up to now demonstrates the opposite conception—the conception, namely, that the relations between man and man are in the main honorable—somehow fails to persuade. Distrust remains. Distrust assumes that even if you allow Richard Roe and John Doe to do pretty much what they like as private persons (of course, within the laws and customs of the land), the moment you elevate Richard Roe and John Doe to posts of eminence or power or authority or responsibility, an irresistible impulse toward evil overcomes them, and to hamper this impluse, you must guard yourself against Richard Roe and John Doe as officials or teachers or lawyers or air-raid wardens or public librarians.

Clearly, there is something to be said for this suspicion. Whitman spoke soundly when he referred to the never-ending audacity of elected persons. Vigilance is the eternal price of liberty, and perhaps we do well to translate vigilance into suspicion. It is clear that Richard Roe and John Doe do occasionally yield to temptation. We have impeached and convicted governors and judges and other public officials because they were false to the principle that public office is a public trust. Members of the president's cabinet have plundered public lands and public funds; officers of the army have been found guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman; lawyers have been disbarred because they were unfaithful to a professional code of ethics; physicians have been disqualified for violating the Hippocratic oath; priests and ministers have now and then been unfrocked for unclerical conduct; teachers, with or without an oath, have here and there been false to the highest moral ideals. There are foreign spies in the United States, just as there are American spies abroad. Therefore, is it not wise to require all the members of these suspected callings to take a loyalty oath? Then, when we catch them violating this oath, we shall have them cold.

But this argument becomes less persuasive when you begin to analyze it. In the first place, it will be observed that the traitor, the swindler, the bribe-taker, the scoundrel often took the same oath as did the honest man, but it is difficult to see that the administering of the oath in question affected his character or his actions for the better. Doubtless there are marginal cases; doubtless the violation of an oath of office adds something to the weight of evidence against the criminal official; doubtless weak men, hovering on the verge of criminal acts, have —but how rarely!—had their shaky honesty temporarily restored by someone's reminding them of their oath of office. But it would be difficult, indeed, to show any working relation between an oath forced upon a potential criminal and the quality of his responsibility or loyalty or patriotism. If anything is evident from history, it is that the unscrupulous man does not boggle at an oath; that, on the contrary, he occasionally welcomes oath-taking as a cover for his nefarious endeavors; and that, at the best and commonest, oath-taking of this sort is re-

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garded by such persons as a formula having no deeper meaning than the governor's inaugural address or "fixing" a parking ticket in the magistrate's court. Taking an oath of office did not prevent the scandals of the Harding or the Grant regime, and the prosecution of the guilty parties rested on deeper grounds than the violation of an oath of office or of loyalty.

But the true difficulty with the argument for loyalty oaths is perhaps not this consideration, but a larger one. The difficulty with the argument is that it proves too much. Loyalty oaths are proposed for teachers, and air-raid wardens, and members of the American bar at the moment, but why stop there? Why select these particular classes and not others?

In February, this year, there was a wildcat strike among the railroad switchmen. Our railroads are technically run by the Department of Defense, so that these switchmen were striking against government itself, and might conceivably have been trying to overthrow it—certainly they were hampering it. The stoppage or delay in railroad transportation of persons, mail and supplies, especially of supplies for the armed forces, was far more thwarting to the defense effort than anything professors, lawyers or air-raid wardens put together have ever accomplished. Indignant public officials and indignant newspaper writers declared that railroad workers have no right to strike against a government at war; they said the switchmen were aiding the North Koreans and the Chinese Communists; they said that their conduct was unpatriotic, unethical, disloyal. Why not, then, demand a loyalty oath of all railroad employees, writing into that oath such stipulations as we may think wise for the future safety of the country? Of course, this oath should not be confined to switchmen; it should include all railroad employees. But why confine it to railroad employees? The officers and directors of railroad companies are equally responsible. Of course, if the directors choose the officers, the stockholders choose the directors, and it would seem only fair to compel anyone who owns stocks or bonds in the railroads also to subscribe to such an oath. On the other hand, an oath confined to railroads would be both meaningless and ineffective. It would have to be extended to truck drivers, workers on boats and steamships, and most obviously and above all, to the employees of our airlines, not only by virtue of the reasoning which makes an oath relevant to railroad switchmen, but especially because the possession of aircraft represents a special threat to the national security. And, of course, the officers and stockholders of the airline corporations ought to take a similar oath, on analogous reasoning.

But clearly, on this line, we should not stop with transportation. It would be proper and necessary for workers in our defense plants also to be sworn, and, of course, the officers and owners of the plants as well, since the workers are, in law, but the agents of the owners. Yet, given the demands of modern war, where shall we draw the line between defense plants and any other sort of economic activity? We ought to extend our oath widely, from the cattle ranges of the West, upon which our food supply for the armed forces depends, to the manufacturer of surgical instruments in the East, upon which their health depends, and this must include everybody from cowboys to janitors. But what about the grain dealer, who supplies feed? The leather manufacturer, who supplies material for belts? The caterer, who brings his Coca-Cola and sandwich wagon into the plant for both the health and happiness of the workers?

If this seems extreme—but does it?—let us return to the concept that the teacher, by reason of his opportunity to form both character and opinion, is especially liable to loyalty oaths. Why, if this argument is good, would we allow ministers, priests, rabbis, newspaper men, magazine editors, and book publishers to go unsworn? Teachers do not directly influence adults. No professor has a tithe of the influence of any one of our more than thirty national magazines with circulations of over a million. No schoolhouse is half as influential in the community as the newspaper. Book publishers frequently bring out volumes disagreeing with current policy and impugning the motives

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of government officials—Mr. Owen Lattimore's *Ordeal by Slander* is a recent example—and already we see the American Legion insisting that there is a Communist infiltration into the houses of New York publishers and that book dealers should be forbidden to sell some sorts of volumes. Why should not all publishers, editors and writers be sworn? If it is no abridgment of freedom of discussion to require teachers to take a loyalty oath and to fire them if they express opinions or belong to organizations some government official, state or national, decides to label subversive, by the same token it cannot be an abridgment of freedom of speech to apply the same formula to newspapers, magazines and books. The same logic irresistibly applies to ministers, priests and rabbis, who influence the opinions of millions of Americans, and who, by preaching the religious doctrines of peace, may almost automatically become subversive persons in war. By what reasoning can it be argued that dangerous thoughts are more commonly found among college teachers than among ministers, or that university professors are more persuasive or powerful than lawyers?

Recognizing the validity of this logic, the American Bar Association, with virtually no debate, adopted a resolution calling upon the legislature, the court, or other appropriate authority in each state to require each member of its bar, within a reasonable time and periodically thereafter, to file an affidavit stating whether he is or ever has been a member of the Communist party, or affiliated therewith, and also whether he is or ever has been a member or supporter of an organization that espouses the overthrow by force or by any illegal or unconstitutional means of the United States government or any state government. The fact that a lawyer might join a particular organization in all good faith—say, an organization demanding the initiative and referendum in a state without such provisions—and that this organization may later on be declared by somebody to be subversive and that disbarment proceedings in such a case would thereby become an *ex post facto* affair, did not stop the American Bar Association.

Do you think my example preposterous? As my colleague, Professor Zechariah Chafee, points out in his acute discussion of this extraordinary recommendation, it was seriously argued in the United States Supreme Court a few years ago that the initiative and referendum "destroyed all government republican in form in Oregon," when the question of the constitutionality of those acts reached our highest tribunal; and if the decision of that court had gone in favor of this plea, it is entirely conceivable that any organization working for those measures might now be considered subversive. "Southern judges," writes Professor Chafee, "sharing my belief that an Act of Congress abolishing the poll tax as a qualification for voters is unconstitutional might disbar [a lawyer] for joining an organization favoring such legislation," and he adds: "These examples may seem extreme, but anything can happen under a sedition law."

I have now suggested that the logic which requires a loyalty oath of California professors might also require a loyalty oath of many millions of Americans beside, and you will agree with me that it may be simpler to administer this oath to every American, and be done with it. Before you dismiss this notion as merely fanciful, you should remember that we are well along the road toward such a requirement. Every morning millions of little Americans pledge allegiance to the flag and the government, just as little Roman boys and girls centuries ago went through a ceremony acknowledging the presence and the protection of the gods. Though, since they are minors, children cannot be presumed to know the nature of an oath, the morning ceremony is required by law or custom in order that they may turn into loyal citizens. The courts, up through the Supreme Court, have gravely debated the legality of this performance, because parents belonging to certain religions regard it as idolatrous and brought suit. The Supreme Court has at length found for these parents in the sense that school officials may not punish children who, on the instruction of their fathers and mothers, and on religious grounds, refuse to participate in this morning ceremony. As unthink-

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ing persons will now inevitably jump to the conclusion that I am opposed to saluting the flag and probably liable to action under some sedition law, I hasten to add that I am neither attacking nor defending this ceremony; I am merely inquiring into its validity and its effect upon loyalty. Loyalty to the flag, loyalty to the government are, I assume, loyalties to the highest ideals of the United States and not to a mere form.

If this be true, and I believe it to be true, we may observe that when Huey Long was governor of Louisiana, he scrupulously observed all the forms of law, so that those who clamored for federal intervention in the affairs of that state under that provision of the national Constitution which calls upon the federal power to preserve the republican form of government in the several states, found themselves helpless; yet little children in Louisiana were, during the Long regime, solemnly pledging allegiance to a state government as essentially un-American as any we have ever seen. Contrariwise, though I cannot prove it, I suspect that among the procession of shady characters who have appeared on the television screen as witnesses before the Kefauver committee, or in the courts in espionage cases, or before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, you will find a considerable fraction who, in their school days, constantly pledged their allegiance to the flag and to the American government, but it does not appear that the loyalty they pledged to flag and government in any way stopped them from doubtful, disloyal or criminal careers directly contrary to the highest ideals of American life. I suggest that the roots of loyalty do not lie in oath-taking or in oath-making, but in one's allegiance to a philosophy of values and a way of thinking that no oath can either create or enforce.

What is an oath? It is, of course, a solemn pledge, and should be employed only on great and solemn occasions. It is appropriate to the magistrate and the soldier, and I could only wish that the circumstances under which the soldier and the magistrate took their public oaths were more solemn and impressive than they usually are. But the term "oath" is itself ambiguous, and those who have clamored for loyalty oaths from all sorts of persons have, I fear, taken advantage of this ambiguity. An oath may be either a promise or a purgation. If I am elected to public office, I solemnly swear or affirm that I shall perform my duties to the best of my ability. If I am sworn as a witness in a court of law, I promise with equal solemnity to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. My pledge governs relevant acts in future time. But when I am required to swear that I have not done something in the past—as, for example, joining the Communist party, or any affiliate thereof, or any so-called Communist Front organization—I am not pledging myself to any future action: I am purging myself, I am reassessing my past actions, not in the light of their motives and values at the time action was taken, but in the light of their motives and values imposed upon me by some superior power at a later date; and when I have made this pledge, I am helpless in the hands of that power, over which I have no longer any control. I have, in other words, admitted the propriety of an *ex post facto* public evaluation of my past private life. The fact that I took such and such an action five years ago, in good faith, and with honest intent, is now made to appear a doubtful, suspicious or wicked action in the light of events long after that act—such as joining a movement having such and such a purpose—and I find, incredibly enough, that I am adjudged guilty until I can prove myself innocent. I am not only adjudged guilty, but I am even liable to be adjudged guilty without my knowing it.

Do I sound extreme? A distinguished American historian, who shall here be nameless, was for one solid year denied a passport by our Department of State because, unknown to him, his name had appeared as a sponsor of a school that somebody or other said was a Communist front. The professor in question was given no explanation at the time his passport was denied him, and not until the occasion which required the passport was a twelve-month in the past, did he learn, and then only indirectly, why he had been adjudged unworthy to represent his country in a foreign

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institution of learning. A medical friend of mine had to spend hundreds of dollars to prove that he is a loyal American, though his connection with the medical service of the United States was at the moment casual and even indirect, all because not he, but his wife, was supposed to be a member of liberal groups that somebody else vaguely labeled subversive. A member of the faculty of a leading state university, who spent a few months as a member of the Communist party, as he had a legal right to do, and who, finding it not to his liking, left the party and was thereafter cleared by Army Intelligence of all unpatriotic or disloyal taint, was vehemently attacked eight years later in the legislature of the state as red, radical, subversive, or what not, and the university is now being "investigated" because all this is supposed to prove that the state university is a nest of Reds. The scholar I am talking about, having told the United States Army what it wanted to know and having been cleared by military intelligence eight or nine years ago, could naturally see no reason to place his entire political history before the public, especially since university administrators, having a choice among several candidates, are not always favorable to the man who, shall we say, a decade earlier made a political mistake. We have, in truth, reached that stage in our curious emotional development that we are virtually assisting the Communist party to go underground by making it uncomfortable or dangerous for its members publicly to admit their allegiance, and we are preventing persons from leaving the Communist party by penalizing them for repentance. If you think this is a mere professor sounding off, I beg you to read President Truman's message vetoing the McCarran Act, a message the logic of which I have, as it were, merely summarized in this statement.

Oath-taking and oath-making seem to grow by what they feed on. I think professors were right in resisting the original loyalty oaths imposed by many states after World War I. They were right, not because the professors were disloyal, but because, if you impose an oath having such and such provisions in it, the temptation is almost irresistible, at another time, to impose another oath having a larger range of provisions. This in fact is what has happened. The original loyalty oaths of the 1920's pledged the signer to uphold the constitution of state or nation—an action in future time. In so far as any oath guarantees or bolsters allegiance, this oath ought to have been sufficient for all time. But the proponents of a loyalty oath now find that the oath does not guarantee loyalty, and, as in the case of California, people of this persuasion insist upon oath number two. But if oath number one does not insure loyalty, how can it be argued that oath number two is going to insure it? Experience shows that unscrupulous men will take any necessary number of oaths, yet continue in their wicked ways, whereas an honest person, if he respect the oath, will either decline to take it because some action of his in the past now seems to him to fall within the prohibitions imposed, or because, if he take it, he ceases from a variety of activities and inquiries useful to the commonwealth either because he is not sure they fall within the prohibited area or because, if he engage in them, he is certain he will be attacked under the provisions of the oath by parties anxious to stop this particular activity. A particular instance is the American Civil Liberties Union and its branches, an association of devoted Americans who are heroically trying to keep alive the tradition of liberal thought which extends from Jefferson to Mr. Justice Holmes, but which has been labeled in some states as subversive, a Communist front, or something similar because, in our best national tradition, it is trying to protect minority rights.

I do not know how it is in Ohio, but I do know that elsewhere in the country intelligent and sensitive and patriotic citizens have in sheer despair given up their public activities because, in the general hysteria of the day and in the unexampled range given to the forces of repression by these demands for purgations and oaths and investigations, they find it idle to struggle further. The tremendous loss to the national life resulting from this despair is, to my way of thinking, a far greater blow to the na-

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tional welfare than any threat from the diminutive Communist party in America—unless, of course, by driving Communists underground, we multiply the opportunity for indoctrinating others secretly, which they desire and we deprecate. The damage done to the University of California is merely an index of a general disease. It is not an unusual, but only a typical case of what we are doing by implanting fear and anxiety and suspicion in place of assuming that, no matter what we do, some men will be weak and some men will be wicked, but that, by and large, the American people, including university professors, are trustworthy, honest, decent and dependable.

I find nothing in the history of loyalty oaths that leads me to believe they accomplish anything more today than they have accomplished in the past. Let me give you two examples of times of historic crisis. Godfrey Davies of the Huntington Library, one of our greatest seventeenth-century scholars, permits me to summarize an unpublished paper of his concerning loyalty oaths during the Puritan Revolution and after. In 1640 members of the Long Parliament took an oath of loyalty to the King. In May, 1641, members of the House of Commons swore a second oath to maintain the true Reformed Protestant Religion as expressed in the doctrine of the Church of England. In July, 1642, members of both houses took a third oath that they would live and die for King and Parliament, which turned out to mean that the Royalists fought for the King and the Roundheads for the Parliament. In 1643 these same persons, or many of them, took an oath that they would assist and support the parliamentary armies, and, a few months later, swore a fifth oath to promote the glory of God, the honor and happiness of the King, and true public liberty. A little later all Englishmen eighteen years of age or older were ordered to take an oath of loyalty to the famous League and Covenant.

On April 5, 1645, the triumphant Parliament imposed a new loyalty oath—the seventh in five years—compelling the ex-Royalists to swear they were not assisting the King, under penalty of imprisonment. In February, 1649, the remnants of the Long Parliament repealed all oaths of loyalty to the royal family and instituted oath number eight, requiring all Englishmen of eighteen years or more to swear allegiance to the Commonwealth. In 1653 Cromwell caused this oath to be repealed, and substituted for a general loyalty oath a series of special oaths. But in 1658 many swore fidelity to his successor, Richard Cromwell, including those most active in subverting Richard's government. In October, 1659, Parliament tried to impose a new loyalty oath. But in 1661 an oath of allegiance to the House of Stuart had to be taken by all officials, including the provision, natural enough in the circumstances, to the effect that no man was obligated to endeavor any change of government either in Church or State by reason of any oath, covenant or engagement he might have taken in the past—perhaps the most cynical comment on oath-taking in the whole history of law.

Yet the same persons who swore loyalty to Charles II rose in rebellion against James II in 1688, and a little later took a new loyalty oath to William and Mary. Mr. Davies concludes by quoting two contemporary comments. One is by Samuel Butler in *Hudibras:*

> *Oaths* are but *Words*, and Words but *Wind;*
> Too feeble Implements to *bind.*

The second is by an anonymous Royalist, cited by Colonel Sydenham in a parliamentary debate of 1657. The statement by the Royalist is that "they could not make such an oath as he could not swallow." The implication I draw from this cynical history is that men would have acted precisely as they acted, with or without loyalty oaths. They were faithful or unfaithful, by reason of motives and principles and interests arising from training and tradition.

There was a vast deal of oath-taking in England during another critical time—the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. What was the result? In 1798 England trembled in fear of a French invasion, and the poet Coleridge, now an ardent Tory, wrote a poem called "Fears in

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Solitude." It was a period, you will recall, when poetry frequently did the work that today is done by political commentators and newspaper columnists. Coleridge desperately wanted Great Britain to win, but was afraid of the general public cynicism in what he characterizes as a "vain, speech-mouthing, speech-reporting" time. One of the reasons for his despair was the cynicism engendered by incessant oath-taking. The passage runs:

> Oh! blasphemous! the Book of Life is made
> A superstitious instrument, on which
> We gabble o'er the oaths we mean to break;
> For all must swear—all and in every place,
> College and wharf, council and justice-court;
> All, all must swear, the briber and the bribed,
> Merchant and lawyer, senator and priest,
> The rich, the poor, the old man and the young:
> All, all make up one scheme of perjury,
> That faith doth reel; the very name of God
> Sounds like a juggler's charm; and, bold with joy,
> Forth from his dark and lonely hiding-place,
> (Portentous sight!) the owlet Atheism,
> Sailing on obscene wings athwart the noon,
> Drops his blue-fringèd lids, and holds them close,
> And hooting at the glorious sun in Heaven,
> Cries out, "Where is it?"

I think the proponents of loyalty oaths are like this owl, hooting at the glorious sun and crying out, "Where is it?" Loyalty oaths neither create, nor prove, nor protect loyalty to the American tradition. They do not in the least help us to detect the traitorous or the criminal. Every lawyer I have talked to assures me that existing laws are ample to punish those who would betray their country or perjure themselves for treasonable purposes or otherwise be untrue to their American heritage. There are solemn occasions, indeed, when an oath is a proper and impressive ceremony, but the oftener oaths are required, the hastier the ceremony, the less impressive the oath, and the greater the temptation to regard the oath as a minor and meaningless legal convention. Loyalty oaths today are hampering government, weakening education, and restricting both research work and the distribution of the fruits of research among the peoples of the earth. They will eventually induce among our people the same cynicism they induced in England in the seventh century and again in the eighteenth century, the same cynicism that was induced in this country by the Alien and Sedition laws.

If this nation is so feeble that its intellectual classes have to be plastered together by loyalty oaths, it will not survive by reason of these oaths. If there are those who think that only by loyalty oaths the democratic state can survive, I can but reply that these very persons, who demand this outward and formal proof of an inward and spiritual faith, are themselves false to the democratic spirit because they profoundly disbelieve the honesty of the average man; they are profoundly false to the axiom that every man is innocent until he is proved guilty; and they profoundly distrust the possibility of democracy itself. There have been, and there probably still are, traitors, perjurers and spies in the country, but they are a fraction of 1 per cent of the total population of decent, intelligent, God-fearing Americans. No conceivable loyalty oath is going to prevent the traitor, the perjurer or the spy from being what he is, just as no loyalty oath is going to help the police to expose him. As I am by faith a Jeffersonian democrat, defiant and unashamed, I cannot better conclude these remarks than by quoting a passage from the famous First Inaugural Address:

> If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it. I know, indeed, that some honest men fear that a republican government cannot be strong; that this government is not strong enough. . . . I believe this, on the contrary, the strongest government on earth. I believe it is the only one where every man at the call of the law, would fly to the standard of the law, and would meet invasion of the public order as his own personal concern. Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question.

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The Reader Replies . . . . . .

THE READER REPLIES *regularly carries miscellaneous comments by readers on various articles which have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: The Editor,* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *415 First Avenue, New York 10, N. Y., and should not exceed 300 words in length except on request. Because of limitations of space, the editors cannot guarantee to print all letters received. Letters intended for publication in the Winter number should be mailed before October 15.*—EDITOR.

"Like a Sitting Breeze": Puzzle or Poem?

Some time prior to March 1 in this year of grace, Peter Viereck, professor of history in Mt. Holyoke College, and one of our modernistic poets, sent to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR three stanzas, titled "Like a Sitting Breeze." They appeared in the Spring issue. Hiram Haydn, with refreshing editorial frankness, admitted: "The plain, simple truth is I'll be blamed if I know what it all means." Then he directed these unmistakable words to the poet: "I'll hold that poem until I hear from you." He did hear from Peter Viereck, whose explanatory tractate expanded through two and one-half columns of the magazine.

What is an admirer of the immortals whose stanzas need no formal explication to think of Peter Viereck's puzzle in verse? Only a gifted mind reader could penetrate the Viereck cranium and snare the meaning. I question whether a Poe with all his cryptographic skill could solve the enigma. For a generation, radicals like Viereck, e.e. cummings, Auden, Pound, Thomas, et al., have been inflicting on a patient public verse so esoteric that a battery of Philadelphia lawyers turned poets could not divine the real meaning. And the distressing thing about the whole modernistic muddle is that too many editors of our reputable magazines, kowtowing to novelty, have opened their columns to these riddling practitioners, who snootily scorn the "vulgar" public, holding by innuendo that genuine poetry is caviar to the masses.

Viereck begins his lengthy commentary with words of implicatingly gleaming hauteur: "I shall not attempt to suggest the various implications, connotations and secondary meanings, which for the author are the most satisfying part of the poem, namely, its magic"; so the inevitable conclusion is: "The public be damned: it knows nothing of the poetic magic I glory in, and never will. Poetry is for the illuminati only," meaning, by implication, Viereck, cummings, Winters, Thomas and others of the same kidney. Militantly, some of us who know that these modernistic versifying prestidigitators exercise no monopoly in the realm of poesy refuse to take it lying down: to do so would be to forswear allegiance to the immortals. . . .

Should a poet as poet practice what he preaches as critic? To the April issue of *Commentary* Peter Viereck contributes an admirable article titled "Pure Poetry, Impure Politics, and Ezra Pound." On page 345 Viereck writes:

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The current battle of "obscurity" versus "clarity" tends to divide poetry into two extremes equally deadly to poetry. The first extreme, in the name of anti-philistinism, is for cross-word-puzzle poetry which, whatever its fascination, would kill poetry by scaring away its audience. The second extreme, in the name of communication, would demagogically popularize poetry, in betrayal of all standards, until it reaches the widest but also lowest common denominator and is no longer poetry at all, but verse. The first group would sterilize the muse. The second group would prostitute her. Is there no third possibility for the serious craftsman? The answer is: Such a third force must prefer a difficult simplicity to an easy obscurity. . . . Great art communicates lucidly and with classic simplicity the most difficult level of ideas and emotions.

How can Peter Viereck's puzzle-poem of twelve lines be reconciled with the concluding statement just quoted? If that poem were "great art" beyond question, it would communicate "lucidly and with classic simplicity" the truly "difficult level of ideas and emotions," which, alas, were clarified only by more than two columns of explanation!

There is no law on the statute books that prevents a poet from wrapping up his ideas in a puzzle, hiding that puzzle in an enigma, and embalming the enigma in the tight folds of several stanzas, but discerning thousands who know what great poetry is, decline to "fall" for such tinsel subterfuges. They want no fool's-gold, only the precious metal. Graven on their hearts are the imperishable thoughts which via the Great Tradition from Homer to Masefield have glorified the centuries. In common with thousands I resent the attitude of these supercilious moderns, their nose-thumbings, posings and posturings, their back-scratching-closed-corporation antics, their labyrinthine logic and mummified ideation.

Here I take my stand stubbornly as Luther at the Diet of Worms: Let the whole damn kit of obscurantist verse-mongers chip in and sponsor to their hearts' content a magazine or magazines in which only their precious enigmatic lines are to be embalmed, so long as they do not ask those of us who like our poetry "straight" to wrestle with them; and—may the gods hear and give answer—let the editors of our distinguished magazines decline for novelty's sake to print any verse that has a cryptographic smell. So long as editors put their imprimatur on these wares, just so long will the devotees of puzzling "magic" continue their fabrication.

Side by side with Peter Viereck's (poem) puzzle I submit three stanzas, which under the aegis of parody stick as closely as thought allows to the precise line-form of the Viereck masterpiece of puzzlement—unadulterated obfuscation, since only Viereck could lay down the meaning-pattern, just as I am confident no other reader can duplicate the exact pattern of my enigmatic verses. If Viereck's three stanzas are poetry, so are mine. If there is beauty, charm and loveliness in his lines, they should be found in mine. His muse may have smiled approvingly. Mine blushed and hid her face for shame. Jealous as I am that the Great Tradition be not flouted, rudely trampled on by feet that have never climbed to the heights of Parnassus, I believe profoundly that if Peter Viereck's example is followed by modern aspiring youth, sixty years hence it will be as difficult to find in the poetry of that era the loveliness that once was poetry's alluring charm as it is to find nuggets of gold in solid limestone. My explanation of the poem-puzzle accompanies this criticism—but it certainly does not fill two-and-a-half columns.

LIKE A SITTING BREEZE

Peter Viereck

It was my cruel cross-roads: duel or fall.
Say: "loveliest of trees, the cherry now."
O say it: "because I do not hope to turn again,"
Therefore I'll choose no farther than these petals fall.

It was my cruel hour. Choice is now,
And neither way will lead to Loveliest again.
I want to stop. Stop here where the petals fall.
Suspend me in this choiceless Now.

If all the spilt petals could climb like crabs up the tree again,
If hoverers could wait where they want and never ever fall,
I'd stay. Like a sitting breeze, I would. But (petal-treading now)
I'm off to the lonely duel by the water's edge again.

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LIKE A FLYING TREE

Laban Lacy Rice

It was the parting of the ways: to left or right?
Quote: "'Twas twilight, and the sunless day went down."
I'll say it: "I'm headin' for the last round up,"
So, dearest, sing your sad songs for me.

The thorns did pierce my soul: must I go on?
Ah, Loveliest, that this should ever be!
Dead hands, tired feet and scalding tears!
The hypocritic days will smirk and sneer.

O night and tears! the dungeon laughs for glee:
It's ever never now: the door clangs loud.
And yet, were I a flying tree I'd flee these walls
And damn the keeper: hark, I hear his step.

Explanation of the verse-puzzle, "Like A Flying Tree"

This mongrel verse depicts the tragic story of a lover of great Poesy who has offended the Muse, and for this folly is compelled to spend his remaining days reading *only* modernistic verse of the enigmatic sort. He comes to the parting of the ways, and though he knows he must go left by decree of the Muse, pauses and phrases the academic question: "Left or right?" Compelled to go left, he prepares for his "last round up, twilight and sunless days" of feeding on unrimed puzzles. Resigned to his fate, he implores his "dearest," to sing her sad songs, then in agony of soul shrieks to his "Loveliest," the spirit of Divine Poesy, "that this should ever be!" "Dead hands, tired feet and scalding tears" symbolize his suffering, and because of his folly the "hypocritic days" will rub it in by smirking and sneering. Finally the prison doors shut and he is immured in pages of maddening puzzlement while the dungeon laughs at his discomfiture. Hopeless, but still a bit spunky, he sighs that if he were a flying tree . . . But as trees do not fly, he will not have the joy of damning from the outside his tyrannical keeper, namely, riddles in verse; so by compulsion of the Muse he must buckle down to his nauseating job. His keeper's footsteps approach.

LABAN LACY RICE
Ware Neck, Virginia

Like a Sitting Breeze

As a constant and admiring reader of the SCHOLAR, and a lover of poetry, I have long wondered just what were your criteria by which you selected verse for publication. Therefore, I was delighted at the enlightening exchange of letters between you and Peter Viereck in the Spring issue. I felt as puzzled by the "Sitting Breeze" as you seem to have been, and even after perusing the poet's explication I still can't find the poetry alleged to be there.

The ideas about modern poets and critics that have been simmering in me for some time suddenly came to a boil, and I made a cup of tea, which I am sending to you, with the thought that it might at least wet your whistle if it did not greatly refresh you:

CUP OF TEA

Is a poem a puzzle? Is poetry written in code?
Must a poem always carry a heavy load
Of comment and note,
Which the listener has to swallow and digest
Before he feels the charm the poet expressed
In the enigma he wrote?

A poem has always been and remains a song,
Whether it be hokku-short or Odyssey-long
With rests of prose;
And you feel its tenor at once, though year after year
Its many subleties one by one flash clear
And its beauty grows.

A poem that one remembers and desires
To hear again and again, always inspires
Love at first sight!
Something in rhythm or word-flash, image or thought,
Has wrought a spell and irresistibly brought
Immediate delight!

ASA M. HUGHES
321 East Second Street
Lansdale, Pennsylvania

★ ★ ★

Mr. Viereck tells us that he came to write his poem when he had to *force* himself to take a stand on certain ethical implications of Pound's *The Pisan Cantos*. What is arresting is the nature of the choice he proposes, the alternative of "duty, life of action and conflict, moral responsibility" opposed to "pure aesthetic contemplation, no

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duty, no action, no ethical issue; sheer *l'art pour l'art.*"

If such a choice could be made, which fortunately it cannot, it would in either case represent an ethical attitude. Neither the wildest surrealism nor the most languishing aestheticism fails to score its moral points. These may not be such as Peter Viereck can admire, but they are nonetheless there. A single writer in a single work may offer a variety of ethical standards. Rousseau's *Social Contract*, for example, seems to have been available equally to democrats and fascists. In our own time, the strange bedfellows of T. S. Eliot sing us to sleep everywhere.

Freedom of ideas, I feel, is the precondition of our continued progress, and certainly of our safety. Perhaps, "the free artist, like any other free citizen, has a moral responsibility against fascism and anti-Semitic persecution," but this is a narrow goal, especially if we are inclined to reject our enemies totally, without any attempt to understand why they are as they are and what they are actually trying to do. Our prior and greater obligation is to comprehend, both as free artists and citizens, the phenomena of human life, and to build the kind of society in which fascism and anti-Semitism can have no appeal. Mr. Viereck professes to fear a conformist totalitarianism of left or right, but his method appears as irresponsible as propaganda. Extreme viewpoints, those which oppose irrationality with irrationality, have not provided our democratic answer. Part of our freedom is in the fact that we have never chosen to define freedom absolutely.

GENE BARO
University Station
Gainesville, Florida

★ ★ ★

Since your distinguished magazine, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, is purported to be for the independent thinker, it should not be amiss to make the following observations relative to Peter Viereck's poem, "Like A Sitting Breeze," and your interchange of correspondence pertaining to its clarification, reticent acceptance, and ultimate publication. The evidence, if not enlightening, is most arresting in that a twelve-line poem is so involved with the vexity of vagueness and lack of obvious merit that an editor must ask for a precis in clarification of what the author is driving at—only to be rewarded by 124 lines (approximately 850 words) of prose, which only add further to the confusion and futility of the entire venture.

Are we, your readers, below the saving grace of average intelligence, lacking in some secret formula of the thought processes when we confess to wondering just what considerations motivate an editor in involvements of this nature? Will there ever be a return to basic standards when a poem will be considered on its ability to stand alone, without the synthetic props of who the writer may be, or what honors (genuine or otherwise) may have been showered upon him?

Is it any wonder that more and more the poetry loving reader is developing an aloofness toward poetry in general and specifically to poets of the current era, who are suggestive of some neo-screwball cult which operates in utter disregard of sacred values of old, and appears to be totally oblivious to the factual world, which, after all, still continues to be of some significance in the scheme of man's existence? Is it any wonder that because of these factors, many publications that used to grace their pages with poetry, have discontinued its use altogether?

Let us have poetry—twelve lines, or any number of lines—but let it be the kind that does not require twenty times its volume in prose to clarify what it is all about!

ERICH S. KLOSSNER
College Station
Pullman, Washington

Cosmic Card Game

I doubt that you did well to publish the "Cosmic Card Game". A parody like this needs readers so familiar with the writing victimized that they not only see how funny the joke is but also appreciate its justice and *finesse*. Otherwise it can misfire

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and do needless damage. Such a misfire is not unlikely if too few in your wide and unspecialized audience prove to be "in on" this rather private joke.

Though in places it looks more like the innocent temerity of a bright undergraduate, "Cosmic Card Game" is probably aimed at razzle-dazzle in higher and supposedly more responsible places. The butt, I would guess, is a single, not wholly typical phase of the New Criticism—a phase seen, not in the work of critics with established reputations, but in that of some of their younger colleagues which appears in the "littler" magazines. Though often undeniably brilliant, this work sometimes is erratic and sometimes fair game for a parodist. (Such is the risk of aiming high.) But nobody should suppose that this represents the whole movement.

I am not much worried about the readers who think the joke is on the writer himself. They pretend to no knowledge and no opinion. They will probably skip the piece anyway. I *am* concerned, though, about the "knowing" readers who do not know enough—who know just enough about the New Criticism to be sure they want none of it, but too little about it to tell the good in it from the bad or to see the difference between a parody that ridicules its particular abuses and a lampoon that demolishes indiscriminately. For them, this piece can only strengthen old prejudices and, instead of illuminating, prolong the darkness.

C. C. WILLIAMS
New Haven, Connecticut

★ ★ ★

Isn't it a little unfair to the New Criticism to print with a straight face Thomas Kyd's *reductio ad absurdum* of the method? What especially amuses me is Mr. Kyd's "humility" in a paper so filled with snide remarks about all other scholars, including Kittredge.

It is quite true that Mr. Kyd is the first to discover that the noun *dice* is really an indecent use of the verb *to die*. But then, as he remarks, that is easily understood by boys from "the better private institutions." It is unfortunate that this prep-school interpretation somewhat spoils the meaning of the passage. In the game for empires it is perhaps more significant that Caesar can make the dice obey him than that he can control his sexual climaxes—a skill which for some reason Mr. Kyd, like Dr. Kinsey, regards with a jaundiced eye.

It is also intriguing to find Charmian playing the American game of poker and praying for "a full house—Kings high." I suppose this pre-cognition on Shakespeare's part, is to be equated with Mr. Kyd's extra-sensory perception in finding the key to the play in an *Ace* never mentioned in it. We could hardly expect less from a man who, notebook before him, can remember a minor remark from Act I in connection with two lines in Act V.

As he modestly points out, "There is considerable difference in the strength of human minds." Not everyone on the basis of a few real and numerous farfetched images from card games can turn Shakespeare into a cryptogram revealing the doctrines of Mr. T. S. Eliot. (It is nice to know that Mr. Eliot has "established" the play.) To a person with Mr. Kyd's distaste for the clapperclawing of the vulgar it must be galling to reflect that his predecessor in this sort of game was a Miss Delia Bacon.

ERNEST EARNEST
Temple University
Philadelphia 22, Pennsylvania

★ ★ ★

Mr. Thomas Kyd should not have concluded his naïve attempt to reduce *Antony and Cleopatra* to puns without considering the puns potential in his own name. I am thinking not only of cutting of capers and kidding, but of the indiscriminate eating habits of goats of whatever age. But if Mr. Kyd himself is willing to swallow anything, he should still not expect the rest of us to.

WALTER F. WRIGHT
The University of Nebraska
Lincoln 8, Nebraska

★ ★ ★

I must protest against the gross breach of taste exhibited in Mr. Kyd's article. It is a

(*Continued on page 494*)

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Under Whatever Sky

IRWIN EDMAN

And the Name Died before the Man

The ironies of fame have been noted by everybody since (and including) Marcus Aurelius. This was, indeed, as everyone used to know, a favorite theme of classical moralists. They foresaw, perhaps, that their most humanistic sentiments would two thousand years later be parsed and conjugated by irked schoolboys, that their faces would be immortalized and immobilized on larger than life monuments, that their names would be synonymous with a style like Cicero's, a serenity like Horace's, an alleged operation—like that which, by some interfusion of fact and legend, is now connected with the name of Caesar. The whole traditional theme came into my mind the other day when I was given by "Information" a telephone number the exchange name of which was Kilmer. It took me a moment to realize that it was Joyce Kilmer who was being thus immortalized, being five times immortalized, presumably, for this was "KIlmer 5." There must be many who call numbers at that exchange who have never connected a poem or a song about trees with those syllables, or perhaps never heard of the song or the poem or the poet.

Once, crossing the campus at the University of California at Los Angeles, I happened to ask a group of students if they knew to whom the name Royce over the Philosophy Building referred. "Sic transit gloria" sprang to my lips when one of them replied casually, "Oh, some tycoon or other." The grand metaphysical foil for William James, the idealist and brooding meditator on the World and the Individual. Tycoon indeed! Near my own home, close to Riverside Drive in New York, is the statue of a Civil War general, at whose chiseled name not even the near-sighted peer curiously.

Some of us contribute from time to time to a scholarship fund to make a permanent memorial for a beloved teacher. And during the first few years survivors of the great man take the trouble to convey his quality to the new generation—especially to the grateful occupant of the fellowship, who is quite prepared to believe that the niche he occupies celebrates someone worth remembering. But after a while the explanations cease; the name has become, not a proper memorial, but almost a common noun—like guggenheim or fulbright. Perhaps the deepest irony comes when the only thing remembered about a man is what art has made of him. How many know much more about Toussaint L'Ouverture than Wordsworth's sonnet about him, and what else does anybody know about Whistler's mother than "Whistler's Mother"? Fame, even in explicit words, defeats itself, for the very words that aim to render a name indelible make one forget the glory of the subject for the beauty of the telling.

Type Casting

Everyone has had the shock of meeting for the first time out of context somebody he has long known. So once, years ago, I encountered my dentist, whom I had never before beheld, save in a white coat and facing me, seated in his dental chair. But I had always admired the way in which he seemed to know, (as, indeed, he unquestionably did know) exactly what he was doing: his quiet certainty, his sense of vocation, and his gentle and wise comments on the human situation—a situation as full of holes as the most cavity-ridden of the teeth he faced. He seemed eternally the same, perpetually ageless. But he seemed an apparition, almost, when, quite unexpectedly, in another neighborhood, at a different time of day, I ran into him in a restaurant where I was dining with a friend. Here he was, an elderly civilian, pleasant, intelligent-looking, but without his white coat, and in a public place rather than in his office, the air of authority was gone.

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Once, years earlier, I met a particularly prophetic-looking clergyman waiting, like everyone else, in the subway. I had heard him preach. I had seen him at grave meetings. It seemed almost impossible that he should be here, on the subway platform, looking a little more prophetic, perhaps, than most people, a little more distinguished, but, just the same, a passenger, a citizen, one of many. It was a shock from which it took me some time to recover.

It is said that in the theater, the public prefers type casting, and so do the managers. One movie star specializes in hard-boiled gangster heroes, another in good-natured, brainless blondes. In life, as well as on the stage, one becomes addicted to type casting, to fixed essences of personalities. Teachers cannot get used to seeing their pupils turn into grown men, and pupils, meeting their teachers out of the context of their classroom and their authority, almost resent finding that they do not conform to the type into which sentimental memory had placed them. One comes to think of one's friends and acquaintances in a given mask, in an accustomed pose, in a familiar gesture. It is an affront to our comfortable habits to have to face changes in them, and it is hard to believe that transformations have actually taken place.

Meanwhile, individuals do change, and, like actors condemned to a fixed character role, they wish to play a different order of human being. No wonder children resent hearing an adult say, "My, how you have grown!" It is surprising that there are not often more brattish retorts than: "Did you think I was going to remain a dwarf?" . . . "Come off it," we are tempted to say to a friend who has acquired the dignity and responsibility of some eminent position. "Take off your mask; we recognize you."

We wish to put the dentist back in his white coat, the teacher at his desk, the bank teller at his window, the minister in his pulpit, the barber by his barber's chair, the lawyer at his desk. If we meet them in other modes, we might have to deal with them as human beings. Or, perhaps, what is even more disquieting is that the mask, the posture, the gesture gone, the apparatus vanished and the vocation removed, there is so little human being to discover. People met off their reservations may be more human than one had expected, but they may also be less human, too. The mask, it often turns out, was more living than the man.

Lost Notion

Everyone has had the experience of having lost something somewhere and of laboriously trying to remember all the places where he may have left the precious object: the briefcase containing, perhaps, somebody else's valuable manuscript, the umbrella, the wallet, the spectacles, the fountain pen, the Zeiss opera glasses. Let's see, was it at the bank, the druggist's, the dentist's? Was it in the taxi, the subway, the bus? It is maddening to recall so many places one has been, all in a day, and to realize that inevitably there is some place one has surely not remembered at all.

At least, in trying to find a lost object, one is clear as to what it is one has lost, and one's consternation is the more acute because one knows just what and just how valuable it was. But there is an even worse consternation, the agony that occurs when one cannot even remember what it is that is gone, when one has only the unhappy sense that something has vanished—something of transcendent importance, of unique vitality, of irreplaceable charm: a theme, a fancy, a happy thought gone without a trace. But what the idea was, what the notion was about, one has not the faintest notion, the dimmest shadow of an idea.

"Do you remember what it was we were talking about just as the coffee came at lunch?" I once telephoned a friend in desperation after I had spent an hour trying to recover a glimpse of something that had at the moment seemed to me, and to him, unusually fresh and suggestive in the way of an image (was it?) or an idea.

"I do remember," he replied. "It was something that struck us both, but I can't for the life of me remember what it was. I will call you back if I think of it." He never did call.

How often one wakes up to the hushed intensity of awareness that sometimes comes

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suddenly in the quiet of the night: some idea, clear and splendid, enters one's head, or a line of verse, or a theme for prose—all beautiful in their vividness and pattern—or so it seems in the darkness and the solitude and the silence. "I must do something about it in the morning," one says, and turns over once again to sleep.

Morning comes and one remembers—but what? Only that there had been that incomparable gleam, that apocalyptic insight, that enkindling word. But *what* they were it is impossible to say. If only one had had the sense to have a writing tablet by one's bedside or the energy to stay awake long enough to transcribe the revelation, to capture the magic!

To behave more circumspectly the next time only results in disillusion. The radiant phrase written down in the night on a scratch pad looks drab in the morning—if decipherable at all. Or if, with fanatic self-discipline, one has stayed awake long enough to develop the theme, to expound the insight—how second-rate it seems, and how secondhand, when inspected in the light of day.

It is a comfort to have a reservoir of lost ideas we cannot specify and which others cannot criticize—visions we cannot report, and whose content others cannot scorn. Who can gainsay us in our belief that, had they persisted, these intuitions would have been the signs of that true genius which nothing we have thus far said or done remotely suggests.

Pleased to Meet You

A famous titled Englishman was said to have exclaimed: "When an American says, 'Pleased to meet you,' I never know what to reply." The neutral "How do you do?" is perhaps more prudent, more decorous and more sensible. But often one is tempted to express something less noncommittal in the way of sentiment. But how is one to say more without sounding merely flattering and fulsome. The famous writer, say, has been told a thousand times of his admirable qualities: the incandescence and clarity of his style, the depths of his ideas, the humanity of his vision. Of course, one is quite sure no one else has seen these things quite as sensitively as oneself, and the great man will surely recognize this in one's very tone of voice and in the expression of one's face. "I have been wanting to meet you so long," one begins—and goes on lamely, "I have so long admired your work." The great man looks quite properly bored. After all, it would have been better simply to say "How do you do?"

Or, with a different celebrity, one is tempted to say, "I have had a morbid curiosity about you. You match my image of you. You look just like your prose—quite commonplace really. But that's an instructive thing to have found out. And I have found that out already. It is nice to have met you long enough to do that. Good-by." Again, "How do you do?" would have been wiser, as well as kinder.

But one also meets people other than famous authors or artists—sometimes a totally anonymous stranger whose name one doesn't quite get. In the crush of a great reception, one is casually introduced to some very human being one has never met before. "How do you do?" one says quietly. How much more one feels like saying that here, among twenty people easily to be taken for granted, or left alone, is one person who seems by some gift of immediate sincerity or grace or quizzicality to be a fresh and reviving note in the world. "My, I *am* glad to meet you!" one is tempted to say. "I really didn't expect to find anyone here so alive, so sympathique, so interesting. I'm willing to *bet* you're interesting." One's host, watching, would simply wonder if one had had a cocktail too many.

Or one often very nearly says, "How revolting and crafty an expression," or "How dull and boring you look. I am sorry that I came at all. I had not expected much, but I had not counted on meeting anyone so depressing as you. I'm sorry I ever met you. Your visage will haunt me for the rest of the day. I've had good days spoilt by less repulsive faces than yours." Perhaps, again, "How do you do?" is the best social emollient in the long run. Murders have taken place in cathedrals; they could all too easily take place at cocktail parties, too.

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. . . . . The Revolving Bookstand . . . . . .

The Brass Tacks of Political Morality

CONGRESS: CORRUPTION AND COMPROMISE. By H. H. Wilson. *New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc. 1951. 337 pp. $3.50.*

Reviewed by ROBERT K. CARR

There is more wisdom in this little book by Professor Wilson of Princeton on the subject of corruption in public and private life than is to be found in all of the hearings and reports of the Kefauver and Fulbright Committees, or even in those of the Senate committee that is currently trying to figure out how to raise the ethical standards of the public service. The book has three main points to demonstrate: (1) Morality in government is influenced and shaped by our national morality, and, in particular, our business morality, not vice versa. (2) Contrary to what the Kefauver and Fulbright investigations have suggested, political corruption is not centered exclusively in the executive branch; Congress has had its share of corrupt figures in recent years. (3) The respectable members of Congress, in spite of their eagerness to ferret out and see punished all dishonest administrators, have proved themselves unable and unwilling to discipline their own dishonest colleagues.

All of these points are easy enough to demonstrate. But since they are easily forgotten, they bear constant reiteration. Just the other day the press reported the theft of a diamond bracelet owned by the wife of one of the most eminently respectable and arch-conservative members of the Senate. It was openly stated that the bracelet, valued at $2,500, had been given the Senator's wife by a shipbuilding company as a favor at the time she launched a vessel built for the federal government during the war. There was not the slightest suggestion that such an expensive gift, paid for, of course, by the American taxpayers, was one for which any apology was necessary, and I have seen no editorial comment in any newspaper questioning the propriety of the gift. Yet the difference in ethics between the acceptance of this costly bit of jewelry by a prominent Senator's wife, and the acceptance of a Deepfreeze by a member of the President's family, which was vigorously denounced in Congress and the press, is hard to see.

Most of Professor Wilson's book is taken up with a recital of the facts in some eight or ten cases in recent years in which Senators and Representatives have been conclusively shown to have been guilty of highly unethical, if not criminal, conduct. The misdeeds of such well-known Congressmen as James M. Curley of Massachusetts, John M. Coffee of Washington, Eugene Cox of Georgia, Andrew May of Kentucky, Albert "Happy" Chandler of Kentucky, and Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi are set forth in uncompromising detail. But it is for the respectable members of Congress who failed to discipline these wrong-doers when the facts about their peccadilloes became known that Mr. Wilson reserves his chief condemnation. In no one of the cases described in this book did Congress expel a member, even where he had been convicted of crime. What is more, such responsible leaders of Congress as Speaker Rayburn and House Majority Floor Leader McCormack actually went out of their way to praise and defend Cox, Curley and May. It is Professor Wilson's thesis that this shocking failure on the part of the honest members of Congress to discipline their occasional wayward colleagues is contributing to a deepening contempt for democratic institutions by the American people, to "a cynicism so terrible, that it may ultimately let our democratic institutions be destroyed."

✪ Joel Parker professor of law and political science at Dartmouth College, ROBERT K. CARR was executive secretary of the President's Committee on Civil Rights in 1947, and is the author of several books, chiefly on the Supreme Court and in the field of civil rights. Mr. Carr is currently at work on a study of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

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yet each of these "old" books is selling better than ever before!

AS A REMINDER of the longevity and persistant influence of good scholarly books, we use our space in this issue of The American Scholar to salute a group of sprightly veterans.

Here are four Princeton books whose average age is just short of a quarter-century, but all of which are lively and active on our current list:

KNOWLEDGE FOR WHAT?
The Place of Social Science in American Life

By ROBERT S. LYND. The youngest of the group—only twelve years old—but continuing to justify more than a decade later the words of a reviewer at time of publication: "The most searching volume in the annals of self-criticism in American social science." *$3.00*

MEDIEVAL CITIES:
Their Origins and the Rise of Trade

By HENRI PIRENNE. Although never selling in tremendous volume, this famous book, now in its twenty-sixth year, has sent its influence around the world and seems to gain rather than lose in sales vigor as the years go by. *$2.50*

THE MEANING OF RELATIVITY

By ALBERT EINSTEIN. Twenty-nine years old and, thanks in part to the Generalized Theory of Gravitation which is described in a few pages of the Appendix, selling in larger numbers than ever in its history. *$2.50*

THE CONSTITUTION AND WHAT IT MEANS TODAY

By EDWARD S. CORWIN. The classic treatise, frequently revised to keep pace with judicial interpretation, but basically the same book that began life thirty-one years ago. *$3.00*

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Not the least valuable part of this book is a brief review of the considerably smaller list of British cases of recent years paralleling the American ones, and of the generally responsible action taken by Parliament in dealing with these cases. The contrast between the two countries leads Mr. Wilson to two conclusions. One is that the British have a higher sense of national morality than we do. Corruption in American government is attributed to the intense spirit of individualism that pervades our business life, to the feeling that "anything goes," which Mr. Wilson thinks is the product of our free enterprise system. Only by moving in the direction of a social system in which business enterprise is made responsible to the people does Mr. Wilson think we can begin to overcome the general spirit of lawlessness which is bound to corrupt government as well as private business under present standards. The other is that Congress can succeed in disciplining its dishonest members only by means of a much-strengthened and highly-disciplined party system. Such a system, as Mr. Wilson sees it, would prevent such an incredibly incompetent nonentity as Representative May from rising through the seniority rule to a position of great power in which his corruptibility becomes an irresistible lure for selfish and dishonest private interests. Such a system would also make it possible to expel dishonest Congressmen or to deny them renomination at the next election.

Both of these conclusions are highly controversial. Neither change would be easy to put into effect. But in pointing in these directions Professor Wilson is at least getting down to the brass tacks of the present situation with respect to political morality. The pious generalizations of so many eminent people, in and out of government, that "crime doesn't pay" or that "we must have more honesty in government," are worse than useless, for, however sincere and well-intentioned, they divert attention from the basic aspects of American life and political organization that make corruption possible. Senators Kefauver and Fulbright and their admirers could learn much from this important and timely book.

ESSAYS IN EAST-WEST PHILOSOPHY

An Attempt at World Philosophical Synthesis

Edited by CHARLES A. MOORE

The complete report of the Second East-West Philosophers' Conference, held at the University of Hawaii in the summer of 1949. Twenty-three chapters on: Methodology, Metaphysics, Ethics, and Social Philosophy.

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Still a Good Book

EXILE'S RETURN: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920's. By Malcolm Cowley. New York: *The Viking Press. 1951. 330 pp. $3.50.*

Reviewed by F. W. DUPEE

It will be remembered that *Exile's Return,* first published in 1934 and now reissued with corrections and additions, is a casual history of the Lost Generation of the twenties, written by a man who had participated in many of its escapades and achievements, and who had since acquired what in 1934 was proudly called a revolutionary perspective. Partly memoir, partly essay, the book tells who made up the generation, what kind of children they had been and how they were educated, what they thought and said and drank, how they came to New York to write and then went to Paris to write, what their problems and aspirations as writers were, and how they finally came home in search of roots, some to find them and continue writing, others to exhaust themselves and be destroyed.

There are some vivid individual portraits in the book, but it is in the main and by design the portrait of a group in its relation to capitalist culture. And although Mr. Cowley has, as he tells us, toned down the revolutionary optimism of the original, he has not done so to the extent of seriously falsifying his past. Thus, in his newly-added prologue he retains his advantage as a man of the fifties engaged in contemplating a book he wrote in the thirties on the subject of his experience in the twenties. This former member of a generation that was notoriously without a past now has pasts enough for anyone.

Exile's Return was a good book when it appeared and it is a good book now, clearly limited in some respects but solidly intact. Originally part of a large literature of personal histories and cultural revaluations—a literature produced by the strains and conversions of the Depression—it proclaimed, as so many of those books did, what Auden described in a poem as "the death of the old gang." But even in those lugubrious days Mr. Cowley wielded the revolutionary perspective with relative mildness; and it was obvious from his book that he was not perfectly happy to see the old gang die. If he wrote it in order to pass judgment on the twenties, he also gave evidence of writing it because he remembered having enjoyed himself then. And it is partly the evidence of this enjoyment that recommends the book today, when the exuberance of those years has come to be envied.

It is more and more with the name and genius of Scott Fitzgerald that the twenties tend to become associated. Yet a reader of *Exile's Return* will immediately see that the decade was pleasureable in different ways to Fitzgerald and to Cowley. To both men it meant many things, but primarily it meant to Fitzgerald the discovery of the World, the dazzle and puzzle of money and social distinction; to Cowley, the discovery of companionship in the pursuit of art and amusement. What he seems especially to celebrate in the Lost Generation (among other things, of course—and besides the book is by no means all apology) was its intense feeling of solidarity, its joy in concerted effort and the possession of common values, its fondness for working together in joint enterprises and amusing itself in large bodies. In *Exile's Return* almost no one is ever alone. The men of Cowley's circle are always getting together to discuss a project or plan a hoax or organize a feud or simply to throw a party. Having to get out an installment of a "little magazine" they are editing, they all pile into a hotel room rented for the occasion and pound their typewriters in concert until enough material is on hand to fill the installment. One of Cowley's best stories is about a certain Sunday afternoon party in the country from which Hart Crane absented himself for a while, returning excitedly with a new poem which he read aloud. Here the pleasures of artistic creation were added to those of ordinary companionship and we have an archetypal occasion. And of course the passing of the twenties, the coming of the Depression, was tragic because it proved fatal

✪ Assistant professor of English at Columbia, F. W. DUPEE is the author of *Henry James* in the American Men of Letters series.

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to the *esprit de corps* of the group, as well as to certain individuals like Harry Crosby and Hart Crane.

Serious art had long been a solitary pursuit in America, and it is no wonder that the Lost Generation cherished their solidarity. To those of us who came along somewhat later it seemed a fearful and wonderful thing from which we were forever excluded. But Mr. Cowley's own habit of associating himself with the circle and the times seems to go beyond the requirements of his sociological purpose and to be almost abnormally acute, as if the fate of his ego and fact of his identity were hopelessly in league with those of the old gang. No doubt this is why he became its historian and why the book is as poignant and well observed as it is. But there are weaknesses in it, which may well spring from the same cause. And although comparisons are impolite, especially comparisons of living authors with dead ones enjoying a spectacular vogue, they are unavoidable at this point. Whatever his concern with the World, Fitzgerald had also the feeling of solidarity with his generation and had it to a superlative degree; none of them ever said "we" with more intensity of meaning. Yet his genius for giving himself to the life of the twenties, and for expressing in words the terrible sweetness of the giving, depended on his having an exceptionally vivid self to give, just as Faust had first to possess an aspiring soul before it could be worth his while surrendering it to damnation. And in Fitzgerald's writing the transaction paid off in an astonishing power of tragic generalization and visionary phrase. To quote a minor example also quoted in *Exile's Return:* "By 1927 a widespread neurosis began to be evident, faintly signaled, like a nervous beating of the feet, by the popularity of crossword puzzles." Naturally, Mr. Cowley is very much given to the same kind of generalizing in *Exile's Return,* and he evidently generalizes on the basis of a larger stock of accredited ideas than Fitzgerald ever had. But these were no substitute for the kind of self risked by Fitzgerald; and despite his revolutionary perspective, his hand is not heavier than Fitzgerald's, as we might expect, but actually lighter, more superficial, grasping the trend better than the moral reverberation, and therefore, in search of effect, exaggerating the trend itself. "The Smith College girls in New York were modeling themselves after Lady Brett in *The Sun Also Rises.* Hundreds of bright young men from the Middle West were trying to be Hemingway heroes, talking in tough understatements from the side of their mouths—'but just cut them open,' I said, 'and you'll find that their souls are little white flowers.' " Now, whereas I tend to credit Fitzgerald's remark about the advent of crossword puzzles simply on the evidence of integrity provided by the dramatic rhythm and humor of it—the integrity of a man frankly being fanciful—I don't at this point believe Mr. Cowley at all. The joke at the end is funny in a brutal way, but the rest is so baldly said that it must be taken as fact or nothing—and having myself arrived in Mr. Cowley's New York about that time (circa 1928?) I know it is all guff. With such sentences in view, what can be said but that he didn't really *live* the life of the twenties, he was only intensely around in them. But this is highly unjust to a writer who pretends to genius so little, and to a book that is good in its thoughtful entirety rather than in the brilliance of any parts. *Exile's Return* will survive comparisons as it has survived the passage of time.

"Art Whose End Is Peace"

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF W. B. YEATS. *New York: The Macmillan Co. 1951. XV + 480 pp. $5.00.*

Reviewed by W. Y. TINDALL

If I were making an anthology of first-rate lyrics in English, a slender, elegant gathering of the best, I should include a few by Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Marvell, Blake, maybe a few by Hopkins and some others,

---

WILLIAM YORK TINDALL, professor of English at Columbia University, is the author of *Forces in Modern British Literature, 1885-1946.* Articles by Mr. Tindall have appeared before in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

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and certainly five or six by Yeats. That Irishman is not only the greatest poet of our time (Mr. Eliot has said it) but perhaps the greatest in two centuries or more. He has written more first-rate lyrics than anyone since the seventeenth century, England's great poetic period.

The volume before us brings together for the first time what Yeats thought worthy of preserving from his work. The new *Collected Poems* differs from *The Collected Poems* of 1933, standard until now, by the addition of *Last Poems*, which has been unavailable for some time, and of *A Full Moon in March*. Although convenient and of the highest value, the present collection is incomplete. Many outstanding lyrics, such as "A woman's beauty is like a white frail bird" from *The Only Jealousy of Emer*, a play, and many minor poems that appeared in earlier collections or in magazines have been omitted. But until these neglected or rejected poems appear in the complete works, we can do very well with this volume. It contains the bulk of his memorable poetry. Not all, of course, is of his highest quality; but Yeats is conspicuous among poets for maintaining a consistent minimal level.

Development is commonly a sign of poetic health. However attractive for feeling and tone, Hardy's poems show little change of vision or technique from the beginning of his career to the end. Wordsworth's reveal an almost tragic decline from his early magnificence. Mr. Eliot's have developed, but more in theme and technique, perhaps, than in value. Yeats, however, soared from vision to vision, and as he matured, his diction, rhythm and tone faithfully presented this enlargement. From the soft dreaminess of the first period, he advanced to the austerities of his middle years, and then to the great achievement of *The Tower*, in which all his capacities are united and fulfilled. The later poems, different but not measurably less, prolong his triumph.

Yeats is a great maker, creating reality for us, giving insight into our own experience. Like every major artist he gives us knowledge by harmonies of thought and feeling. But his peculiar value is that his

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vision is available to any literate man, whether simple or learned. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Yeats is a public poet. Although many-leveled, he is good on any level, and the more we know the more we get from him. He is not popular, however, in the sense of flattering our habits.

Take "Who Goes With Fergus?" the great poem of his early years. If we are learned in Irish legend, in Yeats's life, and in Freud, we will recognize the bearing of Fergus upon Yeats's recurrent desire to leave this world for a place of refuge, an island or the womb. But to those without this learning, the poem presents by rhythm, sound and tone the following pattern: a question, a union of opposites, a moment of triumph, and a peaceful conclusion. This structure is a form of our feeling. By form alone, our experience is at once corroborated and enlarged.

Yeats faced and solved the emotional problem of our time. Torn since the Renaissance by the separation of feeling and thought that Mr. Eliot has lamented, men long for unity of imagination and fact, individual and society, and beyond these, of the unconscious mind and the conscious. After trying by turns to find satisfaction in the worlds of imagination and fact, Yeats achieved their fusion in what he called "unity of being." A symbolist—and symbol means putting together—Yeats expressed his ideal in the images of chestnut tree and dancer at the end of "Among School Children," but the evidence of his success is almost all the later poems. Uniting his realities by arrangements of words, these poems give us the peace that is peculiar to great art. When Yeats speaks in one of his poems of "art whose end is peace," he states his aim and his effect.

Words were his agents for reconciling clashing opposites. Basically metaphorical as they are, words seemed to him in his occult moments to be "correspondences" joining matter and spirit. Like Blake, Baudelaire and Rimbaud before him, Yeats took the idea of analogy from the occult tradition and applied it to his emotional and aesthetic discords. His rose is at once a flower and a Platonic idea. By such symbols, which unite the above and the below, he harmonizes what I. A. Richards called our jangling impulses.

It is the relation of part to part in the poem that does us this service. Not the word alone but "words alone," as Yeats says, "are certain good." "Sailing to Byzantium," his most famous poem, is at once an example and the symbol of this creative relationship. Ostensibly about impatience with time and longing for eternity, this poem concerns not only death but art. The relationship among theme, image, sound and rhythm, suggesting many meanings, creates timelessness in time. Among the last poems "The Lover's Song" also symbolizes that "measured quietude":

> Bird sighs for the air,
> Thought for I know not where,
> For the womb the seed sighs.
> Now sinks the same rest
> On mind, on nest,
> On straining thighs.

Americanisms and American Life

A DICTIONARY OF AMERICANISMS ON HISTORICAL PRINCIPLES. Edited by Mitford M. Mathews. Two volumes. *Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1951. 1946 pp. $50.*

Reviewed by GEORGE GENZMER

This is a beautifully legible and eminently readable dictionary of 50,000 terms and meanings that have been coined in the United States or have passed into the English of this country as independent borrowings. In its restricted field it supersedes the *Dictionary of American English.* It draws on more sources, pays due attention to pronunciation and etymology, and carries its record down to the year 1950. The text has been supplemented by four hundred line-drawings of objects now seldom seen. The vocabulary keeps a sensible balance between the historical and the contemporary and among the various classes of

✪ Critic and biographer, GEORGE GENZMER is now at work on a volume on Thomas Jefferson for the American Men of Letters series.

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words. It might have been greatly extended, but genuinely regrettable exclusions are rather few. Mr. Mathews, with the excellent judgment that marks every feature of this work, has preferred a full and detailed treatment of a limited number of terms to what, in any event, would have been only an illusory completeness.

The *DA*, as it will be convenient to call it, is of extraordinary interest, but only a small part of that interest is strictly linguistic. Those words that form the core and structure of English, and which are ordinarily a principal concern of the lexicographer—the pronouns, particles and commonest substantives and verbs—take little space in these volumes. Questions of morphology and syntax figure hardly at all. Nor does the *DA* need to say much about semantic drift. Anyone who is versed in our earlier literature, especially that of the Revolutionary generation, will be aware of many seemingly slight, but often significant, differences in the exact meaning of many words. The language looks familiar, but in fact it is not. Yet most of these differences of meaning are not peculiarly American and therefore lie beyond the area covered by the *DA*. Examples of what may be called De Vriesian mutations of meaning are, of course, strikingly numerous, for in the seventeenth century the naming of strange plants and animals was a rough and ready business. If no Indian name was borrowable, the first English one that came handy was applied forthwith and regardless. The linguistically more interesting process of the Darwinian evolution of meaning, on the other hand, can seldom be studied in the pages of the *DA*.

A cautious, discriminating scholarship has determined what terms should be accepted as Americanisms and what rejected. The geographic test has been relaxed to admit those American objects of various kinds that were first named in Europe. Conversely, no term has been accepted as an Americanism merely because its first occurrence, according to our far from complete records, is in an American document. *Quixotic* may serve as an example of many. It could have been used by some English-speaking person at any time after 1605, and undoubtedly it was, although readers for the *New English Dictionary* failed to note any British instance of it before Thomas Jefferson began using it in 1788. Mr. Mathews is surely right in excluding it. The *DA* frequently quotes the Chicago *Tribune*—you will find that famous headline about Sir William Craigie under *limey*—but it is free from any least trace of chauvinism.

What makes the *DA* so extraordinarily interesting is the thousands upon thousands of dated quotations, extending in time from 1587 to 1950, with which the vocabulary has been explained and illustrated. In their search for the early, the telling, or the definitional passage, Mr. Mathews and his collaborators, salaried and volunteer, have ransacked a good part of the national library and have gone on from there to mail-order catalogues, railroad timetables, and nearly everything else that can be fed into a printing press. Early examples of Americanisms are quoted in German, French, Spanish and even Italian contexts. Johann David Schöpff, a German physician and scientist, who traveled through the States just after the Revolution, had an attentive ear for Americanisms. The *DA* makes good use of him. It has called upon Matthew Arnold to describe a peculiarly American nuance of *lovely*. Margaret Hazlitt, a sister of the great William, and Philip H. Gosse, father of the far from great Edmund, are also among the throng of entrancing, unexpected and informative persons whose writings have been laid under contribution. There could have been still others, but no dictionary of comparable size known to me has drawn on so many sources or chosen quotations with such skill. Besides doing their lexical chore, these quotations are usually interesting on their own account. Each is a vignette of American experience past or present. Imagination, humor and an appreciation of irony and satire have helped to select and present them. The result is not only a scholarly dictionary of Americanisms, but an incomparable source book of American life in its most American aspects. It can't be an accident: Mr. Mathews must have planned it that way.

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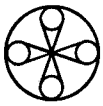

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Brief Comments

A HISTORY OF THE CRUSADES. By Steven Runciman. Vol. I: The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. *Cambridge. $5.00.*

Mr. Runciman expects to complete his study of the Crusades in three volumes; this first one covers the First Crusade and the foundation of the kingdom of Jerusalem. It is, of course, a study of continuous internecine strife, recording heroism as well as horror. There is an index as well as a copious bibliography, appendices and reference footnotes, but the text itself reads smoothly and simply, so that the book may be enjoyed by the general reader as well as the student.

THE JOURNALS OF ANDRÉ GIDE, Vol. IV: 1931-49. Translated from the French with Introduction and Notes by Justin O'Brien. *Knopf. $6.00.*

The fourth and final volume of Gide's *Journal* brings the account of the author's life down to June, 1949—that is to say, to within two years of his death. It spans the period of war, German occupation, and postwar international malaise. Throughout, Gide remains admirably himself: he does not share the chaotic, hysterical feelings of the newborn partisans of fascism or of their equally newborn resisters. His patriotism is genuine but sober. Besides this political substance, the *Journal* contains some excellent portraits, notably that of Gide's daughter and of an adolescent in revolt, the son of the couple Gide lived with during his self-exile in Tunis.

THE SELECTED LETTERS OF JOHN KEATS. Edited with an Introduction by Lionel Trilling. From the Great Letters Series edited by Louis Kronenberger. *Farrar, Straus & Young. $3.50.*

Here we have excellent examples of a great poet's prose: they tell of happenings in his life; they present his literary opinions; and, incidentally, they include a good many letters addressed to Fanny Brawne. A fine beginning to the Great Letters Series inaugurated by the publishers. Lionel Trilling contributes an illuminating introduction of some length.

ONCE AROUND THE SUN. By Brooks Atkinson. *Harcourt, Brace. $4.00.*

A diary which covers every day of a single year, and is replete with the merits of a reflective mind. Despite some unevenness, this is a delightful book to read in leisurely fashion.

THE PAPERS OF THOMAS JEFFERSON. Edited by Julian P. Boyd, assisted by Lyman H. Butterfield and Mina R. Bryan. Vol. 3. Illustrated. *Princeton. $10.*

The third volume of this magnificent project deals with the years when Jefferson was the governor of Virginia, and hence is largely given over to military affairs.

THE LETTERS OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT. Selected and edited by Elting E. Morison with John M. Blum and John J. Buckley. 2 Vols. *Harvard. $20.*

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(*Continued from page 472*)

sad commentary on the mentality of our times that a magazine which calls itself THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR should publish an article which so plainly violates every canon of sound scholarship. It shows all too well the extent to which the New Criticism has corrupted the younger minds of our generation.

Surely any student of Shakespeare should know that the terms which Mr. Kyd refers to in support of his argument ("renege," "patience," "pair," etc.) did not acquire a technical meaning in card playing until many years after Shakespeare's death. When we examine the argument critically, Mr. Kyd's fine house of cards quickly collapses. The only sound brick in this fantastic edifice of ignorance and distortion is the comment of our great master, Professor Kittredge, whom Mr. Kyd refers to so sneeringly.

Let the New Criticism mangle the meaning of Eliot and Pound—there is little enough there for them to mangle. But let them no longer sully the pure fountain of the muses, the plays of William Shakespeare. It is time for the Old Scholarship to rise up against the New Criticism. To paraphrase Cato—*Critica nova delenda est!*

J. DENNIS THEOBALD
New Haven, Connecticut

The New Criticism

Your FORUM on the New Criticism was an inspired idea. I liked the way the talk bubbled over into revealing irrelevancies, and how there was always just enough of the salt of acerbity to give the argument edge.

Anathema upon you all, however, for your explications "off the record" and your "obscurantist" Mr. X's. I wonder if you realize what you've started with all this. Every academic party nowadays has its sage authority who can tell just *which* of his sometime colleagues Mr. Tate was "chipping away at" when he ducked underground. And every graduate school where two or three are gathered in the sacred name of paradox, irony and tension has

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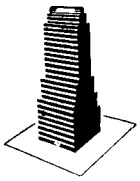

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as many skeleton keys guaranteed to open the "suppressed" portions of the party on MacDougal Street.

But more ominous developments are in the offing. Already I see exhaustive dissertations proving beyond a doubt that Mr. Tate's Mr. X who "talks through his hat as much as Ezra Pound" couldn't possibly be A——d M——h, or establishing without cavil just what Mr. Tate said about St——y H——n concerning Mr. Cowley's Mr. X who is a "coagulation of Ransom and Tate." And now that distinctions between high priests and disciples are in order I suppose there must be a Neo-New Criticism also. That will be a find for some harassed doctoral candidate. Divergent Elements in the Corpuscular Constructs of Certain Neo-New Critics! (*Vide supra*, Cowley, M., on "critical coagulations.")

I hope I won't be condemned to the anti-intellectual phalanx when I conclude that it's just about time somebody took *The Battle of the Books* off the shelf to see just how all this business is beginning to look from a common-sense perspective. The whole controversy is just about ripe for the high burlesque treatment. Unfortunately, however, no latter-day Swift is in sight.

CLARENCE L. KULISHECK
Baker University
Baldwin, Kansas

On the Barzun and Lloyd Articles

The congratulations and thanks of those who respect the English language, and are concerned for the dignity and well-being of our country, are due Mr. Barzun for his reply to "Snobs, Slobs and the English Language."

So the state of our English (already disgracefully low, largely through the practical suppression of Latin, and the overcrowding of the curriculum with subjects that do not minister to the health of the basis of all general education, namely a dependable language) is to be brought still lower by the very teachers of English, who are to keep hands off their own subject, abdicating from their hard-won knowledge in favor of the intuitions of an all-wise populace gifted divinely in the use of tongues.

Such, if one can presume to understand so swampy a thing, is the substance of the *plaidoyer* of Mr. Lloyd. But that our college and university sophomores, juniors and seniors think universal suffrage is mankind's pain, that a reactionary is one who reacts properly, that corporal punishment is punishment of a mild nature as compared with capital which is much more severe (though the culprit still lives on)—these typical, automatic conceptions of the undergraduate are, to say the least, somewhat less than divine.

As I read his essay, linguistically worthy of a better cause, and as the bludgeon strokes of Mr. Barzun descend, I find myself flinching *for* Mr. Lloyd. But he himself does not flinch; and, aided by an uncommonly facile pen, he will undoubtedly continue his dangerous *laisser-aller*, hail-to-the-indolent teaching and preaching.

Confusion (I mean *more* confusion) to professors of English who think like Mr. Lloyd!

A. M. WITHERS
Concord College
Athens, West Virginia

The Riddle of Life

On a second reading, in the Summer, 1950, number, of the informative article by René Fueloep-Miller "The Riddle of Life," I came across two sentences that seemed to convey a misleading impression, since man himself can be traced back perhaps 5,000 *centuries*, and in only one hundred of those centuries can man be said to have any social history at all. First let me quote:

> Centuries have passed since Borelli put the science of life on an experimental scientific basis, since Lamarck coined the word "biology," since Boyle made chemistry into an exact science, and Berzelius laid the foundations of biochemistry. Yet this long stretch of scientific research has not yet sufficed to unlock the secret that was closed to the seers and sages of the pre-scientific era—the ultimate mystery of life (p. 366).

Boyle and the Italian Borelli belong to the Elizabethan period, so the centuries

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manage to get into the plural, but Lamarck died in 1829 and Berzelius in 1848. In this *short* stretch, surely, progress is most encouraging, and, since in dealing with ultimates progress is largely a matter of eliminations such as R. F.-M. describes, his article helps to prove it.

Lewis Mumford in *The Condition of Man* is wrong in saying we are approaching equilibrium. There must be increasing momentum as we enlarge our frontier contacts with the infinite unknown. Mumford's idea really proceeds from the fact that in our tiny planet the old exploration spur has gone. The unexplored territory is under seas, and in the polar regions, but we cannot house there the results of reckless *sans*-contraceptive sexuality. We also face the huge substitution of mechanistic man, otherwise brain machines, and labor-saving apparatus generally. The main answer appears to be propaganda and cheap contraceptives in slot machines and shop windows.

CARLYON BELLAIRS
Commander R.N., Ret.
Sandacres, St. James, Barbados, B.W.I.

The American State of Mind

"The American State of Mind," by Archibald MacLeish, in your Autumn, 1950, issue, even though brilliantly presented, utterly lacks perspective in view of American and world developments.

Let us face facts—freely, fairly, frankly and fearlessly. Totalitarianism is evil—right or left. Close onto a billion of the earth's people are now in an intellectual, moral, spiritual and physical serfdom. Materialistic and atheistic concepts of thought and history have enslaved over four-fifths of a billion—half the world's people—into a hopeless thralldom under sinister satanic Stalin.

Czechoslovakia—central Europe—tried to bridge socialism and democracy. Today, the Czechs are hopelessly enslaved. In Korea, we see "free thought" in chains. "Put none but Americans on guard tonight"—General George Washington.

JOHN V. ROWAN, Col., U. S. Army, Ret.
Colonial Heights, Virginia

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Security and Liberty

Experience refutes even the learned philosopher. His *argumentum ad terrorem* was discussed with great acumen by George William Curtis before the Harvard Chapter in 1862. Curtis' doctrine confutes the "don't hurt the Commies" of Professor Sears. He presents his definition of American liberty: "The principle of our national existence is *liberty under the law*."

Now liberty under the *law* works two ways; it binds the government, also the citizen. This Curtis shows very clearly: "And here let me say a word to avoid a possible misapprehension. We are engaged in a formidable and threatening struggle for the maintenance of a government . . . and when we accepted war, we accepted the condition of war. *War is totally inconsistent with the unrestricted enjoyment of personal political rights. When, therefore, the battle begins, debate ends, because then words are things. Whoever helps the enemy by his tongue or his hand necessarily does it at his peril.*

"Do we ask what is our security against the absolute destruction of these rights which war suspends? *Nothing but the character and intelligence of the people.*"

Does Professor Sears deny that a war exists? A conventional war does exist. But also a very unconventional war, waged for the hearts and minds of our people, particularly our youth, by *poisoned minds* calling themselves scholars. Is Professor Sears ignorant of the Harvard cell whence came the force that produced some of the people he would protect lest we lose free speech and dissent? The Remingtons, the Hisses, the Coplons—were these not given a fair trial? Nay, every effort of the party in power was exercised to *prevent* conviction! The Amerasia case is still hush-hush.

Did Greenglass get a fair trial? Did the eleven Communist leaders get a fair trial? Not one word in the professor's article in criticism of the action of the Communists to besmirch our judicial system and make a mockery of our courts.

What is Professor Sears's practical plan for handling the situation? Not just for

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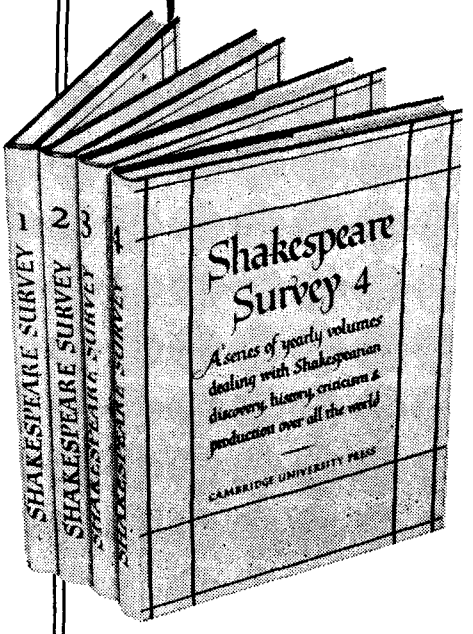

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preserving the right of free speech but of *preserving a free America?* How will he keep the Red professors and teachers, and they are not a few, from poisoning minds? If we do not stop these "scholars" the questions raised by Professor Sears are academic—*the Reds do not permit free speech.*

CHARLES A. TONSOR
8315 116th Street
Kew Gardens 15, N. Y.

★ ★ ★

I agree with Professor Sears's rejection of "security at any price." His concern for traditional liberties, and his stand against guilt by association, show courage much-needed these days. Congratulations for publishing it.

Yet the article has a failing. Professor Sears discusses the background of the security *vs.* freedom problem as a struggle between two nation-states. He omits what I consider the basic element of a struggle between two economic systems.

Professor Sears implies that if those loyal to the nation-state of the Soviet Union are controlled, our security is achieved. We must defend the rights of those who are falsely accused of such a loyalty.

This analysis overlooks the motivation of some zealous investigators. What disturbs them most is possible loyalty to an economic idea. Authorities know how few Communists we have; judging from a recent *U. S. News*, the F.B.I. knows where each is. But who knows how many Americans are sympathetic to socialist economic programs or to the ideals of communism (with a small "c"). That, I think, is why loyalty checks and Hollywood hearings continue; why the "guilt by association" technique is so important. One does not commit an act of disloyalty by meeting an actual or supposed Communist; but one may pick up "bad" ideas, and it is those bad ideas some investigators are really after.

If this is correct, we cannot defend our civil liberties on the ground that our allegiance is not to another nation-state. We must meet those who attack civil liberties on a ground they have chosen. We must

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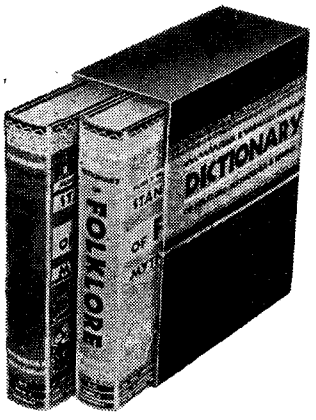

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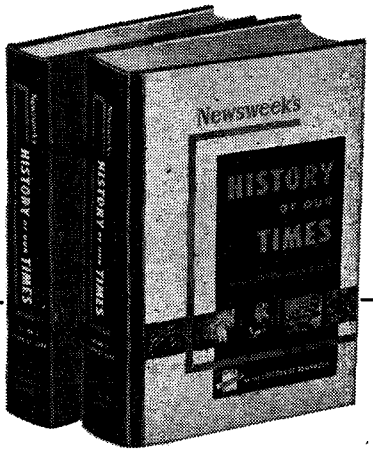

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defend as permissible, not disloyal, the right to question our economic system. Especially, we must agree that it is not really treason to consider Acts II:44-45 a nobler social ideal than private profit.

Dell H. Hymes
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana

On the Sears and Boyd Articles

The two papers in the Spring, 1951, American Scholar, Sears on "Security and Loyalty" and Julian Boyd's "Jefferson Still Survives," were magnificent statements and inspiring reading. Congratulations on having such fine material to run, and on running it.

Roger Butterfield
White House
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A Discussion of Modern Painting

Since the scholars have ignored Edgar Levy's articles, may an artist attempt comment?

In a realm where intuition reigns supreme, Mr. Levy would prove by an erudite intellectualism that the non-objective, though it may be pretty, cannot be art! Later he admits that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, but adds that the pudding must not be judged by the taste! If you enjoy the non-objective, you must prove that it is neither "felicitous decoration" nor "the ethereal beneficences granted by mystic revelation" that you find so appetizing. My friends of the non-objective make no such claim. They say only that it contains the essentials of art minus the window-dressing needed to appease a tyrant or beguile a patron.

The term "decoration," to indicate composition or design, is singularly inadequate for that organization of all the heterogeneous elements of a painting into a harmonious whole which presents the artist with a fascinating but most complex problem, and, to my mind, requires the very highest type of intelligence. Leo Stein goes so far as to say that art and composition are one. This

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is a far cry from Mr. Levy's assertion that the attainment of plasticity constitutes "a higher order of accomplishment." Actually, in cubism, it is hard to separate the two.

This blind spot in the understanding of design explains in part the author's uncritical acceptance of the naturalistic quality of most surrealist painting, in contrast with his rather premature dismissal of the non-objective. He finds mysticism in both, but prefers the surrealist as being more explicit. What optimism! If this meticulous, literal painting of nightmares portrays the unknowable, wisdom decrees that further search after truth be abandoned.

I unreservedly concur in Mr. Levy's admiration for Picasso, but regret that the expressionist Rouault's compassionate humanity remained unmentioned.

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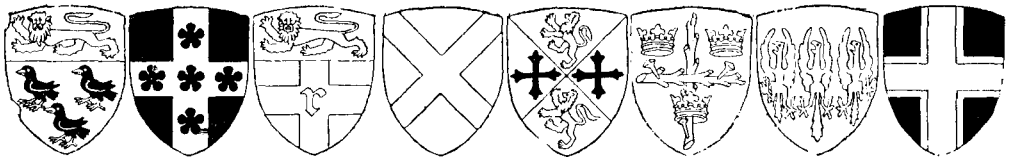

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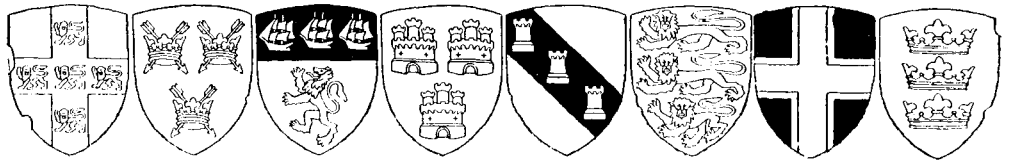

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Index to Volume 20

Names of authors in *italics;* main articles in **bold face.** The pagination of the volume is divided as follows: Winter, 1-128; Spring, 129-256; Summer, 257-384; Autumn, 385-512.

Indexed in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*

Accessary after the Fact, My Grandfather Was an, *Stewart H. Holbrook,* 57
Alcotts and Mark Twain, Faith and Despair: The (Revolving Bookstand), *Saunders Redding,* 112
America, Goethe for, *Wolf Franck,* 206
American Encyclopedia, An (Book Review), *Jacques Barzun,* 374
American Mission, The, *Clinton Rossiter,* 19
American Stereotypes (Book Review), *Melville J. Herskovits,* 244
Americanisms and American Life (Book Review), *George Genzmer,* 486
Anderson, Marcia Lee, 150
Another Country (Poem), *Elizabeth Stanton Hardy,* 38
Anybody Wants to Know, If, *Mark Van Doren,* 396
"Art Whose End Is Peace" (Book Review), *William York Tindall,* 482
Ash and the Oak, The (Poem), *Louis Simpson,* 311
Aspen Leaf (Poem), *Wilson Clough,* 406
At Home with Lucretia Mott, *Mary Ormsbee Whitton,* 175
Bagehot, W., Jr., 393
Bailey, Liberty Hyde (Portrait), *Andrew Denny Rodgers III,* 336
Baltimore, Mencken in, *Van Wyck Brooks,* 409
Baro, Gene, 334
Barrett, William, 86, 218
Barus, Carl, 233
Barzun, Jacques, 289, 374
Behr, Norman M., 235
Bellairs, Carlyon, 496
Bells in the City (Poem), *Eve Triem,* 71
Bessie, Simon Michael, 341
Best, Marshall A., 360
Biddle, George, 252
Bond, Bruce, 122
Boyd, Julian P., 163
Brass Tacks of Political Morality, The (Book Review), *Robert K. Carr,* 476
Brawling, Sprawling Naturalism (Book Review), *John J. Maloney,* 366
Brief Comments (Revolving Bookstand), 254, 380, 490
Britain, Letter from, *Ian Wilson,* 80
Brooks, Van Wyck, 409
Burke, Kenneth, 86, 218
Butterfield, Roger, 504
Card Game, Cosmic, *Thomas Kyd,* 325
Carr, Robert K., 476
Changing Values in the Western World (Forum), *Simon Michael Bessie, Alan Gregg, Hiram Haydn, Matthew Huxley, Alain Locke, Walter Mehring, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Frederick A. Weiss,* 341
Civilization, The Human Factor in Our, *Watson Davis,* 73
Clay for Chinaware, Dachau (A Dramatic Monologue), *I. L. Salomon,* 455
Clock without Glass, by a Deathbed (Poem), *Louise Townsend Nicholl,* 174
Clough, Wilson, 406
Cosmic Card Game, *Thomas Kyd,* 325
Coultas, Carolyn, 107
Cowley, Malcolm, 86, 218
Cubism, A Discussion of Modern Painting: II. Expressionism and, *Edgar Levy,* 39
Davis, Elmer, 9
Davis, Robert Gorham, 86, 218
Davis, Watson, 73
Days Seem Long, Making the, *Joseph Wood Krutch,* 29
Definitive and Creative Anthology, A (Book Review), *Dudley Fitts,* 250
Discussion of Modern Painting: II. Expressionism and Cubism, A, *Edgar Levy,* 39
Discussion of Modern Painting: III. The Mystics, A, *Edgar Levy,* 197
Do You Know the Nature of an Oath? (Forum), *Howard Mumford Jones,* 457
Dupee, F. W., 480
Earnest, Ernest, 472
East and West, The Near East between, *Charles Malik,* 425
Editorial (A Loyalty Oath for Scholars), *Hippocrates, Jr.,* 265
Editorial (A Twentieth Birthday), *W. Bagehot, Jr.,* 393
Edman, Irwin, 109, 236, 362, 473

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Elizabethan Pastoral Landscape (Poem), *Robert Hillyer*, 277
English Language, Snobs, Slobs and the, *Donald J. Lloyd*, 279
Expression and Cubism, A Discussion of Modern Painting: II., *Edgar Levy*, 39
Faith and Despair: The Alcotts and Mark Twain (Revolving Bookstand), *Saunders Redding*, 112
Fitts, Dudley, 250
Flowering of the Southern Demagogue, *Reinhard H. Luthin*, 185
For Oaten Reed (Poem), *Horace E. Hamilton*, 196
Foreign Policy, Psychological Warfare and, *Saul K. Padover*, 151
Forum (**Changing Values in the Western World**), *Simon Michael Bessie, Alan Gregg, Hiram Haydn, Matthew Huxley, Alain Locke, Walter Mehring, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Frederick A. Weiss*, 341
Forum (**Do You Know the Nature of an Oath?**), *Howard Mumford Jones*, 457
Forum (**The New Criticism: I**), *William Barrett, Kenneth Burke, Malcolm Cowley, Robert Gorham Davis, Hiram Haydn, Allen Tate*, 86
Forum (**The New Criticism: II**), *William Barrett, Kenneth Burke, Malcolm Cowley, Robert Gorham Davis, Hiram Haydn, Allen Tate*, 218
Franck, Wolf, 206
Freud, Religion and Science, *David Riesman*, 267
Friesen, Henry J., 360
Fry, Elizabeth Douglas, 233
Galantière, Lewis, 435
Genzmer, George, 486
Goethe for America, *Wolf Franck*, 206
Goodridge, Elinor, 504
Grandfather Was an Accessary after the Fact, My, *Stewart H. Holbrook*, 57
Gregg, Alan, 341
Guradze, Heinz, 108
Hamilton, Horace E., 196
Hardy, Elizabeth Stanton, 38
Harlem Heights (Poem), *Louis Simpson*, 304
Harris, Seymour E., 105
Harsh Honey (Poem), *Bernice Slote*, 446
Haydn, Hiram, 86, 218, 341
Herskovits, Melville J., 244
Hillyer, Robert, 277
Hippocrates, Jr., 265
Hoffman, Daniel G., 360
Holbrook, Stewart H., 57
Hughes, Asa M., 470
Human Factor in Our Civilization, The, *Watson Davis*, 73
Hummel, Arthur W., 108
Huxley, Matthew, 341
Hydie and the Communist (Book Review), *Louis Simpson*, 376
Hymes, Dell H., 502
If Anybody Wants to Know, *Mark Van Doren*, 396
Jefferson Survives, Thomas, *Julian P. Boyd*, 163
John the Baptist (Poem), *Louis Simpson*, 308
Jones, Howard Mumford, 457
Kain, Richard M., 234
Klossner, Erich S., 471
Krutch, Joseph Wood, 29
Kulisheck, Clarence L., 494
Kyd, Thomas, 325
Learned, Henry Dexter, 359
Letter from Britain, *Ian Wilson*, 80
Levy, Edgar, 39, 197
Liberty Hyde Bailey (Portrait), *Andrew Denny Rodgers III*, 336
Liberty, Security and, *Laurence Sears*, 137
Library, The Lost, *Walter Mehring*, 294
Like a Sitting Breeze (Poem), and correspondence relating thereto, *Peter Viereck*, 215
Link, Arthur S., 314
Lloyd, Donald J., 279
Locke, Alain, 341, 370
Lost Library, The, *Walter Mehring*, 294
Loyalty Oath for Scholars, A (Editorial), *Hippocrates, Jr.*, 265
Lucretia Mott, At Home with, *Mary Ormsbee Whitton*, 175
Luthin, Reinhard H., 185
Making the Days Seem Long, *Joseph Wood Krutch*, 29
Malik, Charles, 425
Maloney, John J., 366
Man Who Married Magdalene, The (Poem), *Louis Simpson*, 162
Mark Twain, Faith and Despair: The Alcotts and (Revolving Bookstand), *Saunders Redding*, 112
Mehring, Walter, 294, 341
Mencken in Baltimore, *Van Wyck Brooks*, 409
Meyer, George W., 50
Miscellaneous Comments (Reader Replies), *Bruce Bond, Carolyn Coultas, Heinz Guradze, Seymour E. Harris, Arthur W. Hummel, Laban Lacy Rice, Arnfried Saddai, W. Rulon Williamson*, 105
Miscellaneous Comments (Reader Replies), *Carl Barus, Norman M. Behr, Elizabeth Douglas Fry, Richard M. Kain, Laban Lacy Rice, Augustus L. Richards, Winthrop Tilley*, 232
Miscellaneous Comments (Reader Replies), *Marshall A. Best, Nancy Langhorne Cone, Henry J. Friesen, Daniel G. Hoffman, Henry Dexter Learned, Wright Morris, Dudley Strasburg, Samuel Howard Titus*, 359

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
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Modern Painting: II. Expressionism and Cubism, A Discussion of, *Edgar Levy*, 39
Modern Painting: III. The Mystics, A Discussion of, *Edgar Levy*, 197
Monument to Americans, A (Book Review), *George Biddle*, 252
Morris, Wright, 359
Mott, At Home with Lucretia, *Mary Ormsbee Whitton*, 175
My Grandfather Was an Accessary after the Fact, *Stewart H. Holbrook*, 57
Mystics, A Discussion of Modern Painting: III. The, *Edgar Levy*, 197
Nature of an Oath?, Do You Know the (FORUM), *Howard Mumford Jones*, 457
Near East between East and West, The, *Charles Malik*, 425
New Criticism: I, The (FORUM), *William Barrett, Kenneth Burke, Malcolm Cowley, Robert Gorham Davis, Hiram Haydn, Allen Tate*, 86
New Criticism: II, The (FORUM), *William Barrett, Kenneth Burke, Malcolm Cowley, Robert Gorham Davis, Hiram Haydn, Allen Tate*, 218
New Freedom: An Interpretation, The South and the, *Arthur S. Link*, 314
Nicholl, Louise Townsend, 174
Oath?, Do You Know the Nature of an (FORUM), *Howard Mumford Jones*, 457
Ode: To the Ladies of an Academic Community Predominantly Male, *Clement Welsh*, 422
On Translators and Translating, *Lewis Galantière*, 435
Our Assets and Liabilities (Book Review), *Alain Locke*, 370
Padover, Saul K., 151
Poems (The Ash and the Oak, Harlem Heights, John the Baptist, The True Weather for Women), *Louis Simpson*, 304
Poetry Recital, The (Poem), *Gene Baro*, 334
PORTRAIT (**Liberty Hyde Bailey**), *Andrew Denny Rodgers III*, 336
Psychological Warfare and Foreign Policy, *Saul K. Padover*, 151
READER REPLIES, THE, *Gene Baro, Carlyon Bellairs, Roger Butterfield, Ernest Earnest, Elinor Goodridge, Asa M. Hughes, Dell H. Hymes, Erich S. Klossner, Clarence L. Kulisheck, Laban Lacy Rice, John V. Rowan, J. Dennis Theobald, Charles A. Tonsor, A. M. Withers, Walter F. Wright*, 468
READER REPLIES, THE (Miscellaneous Comments), *Bruce Bond, Carolyn Coultas, Heinz Guradze, Seymour E. Harris, Arthur W. Hummel, Laban Lacy Rice, Arnfried Saddai, W. Rulon Williamson*, 105
READER REPLIES, THE (Miscellaneous Comments), *Carl Barus, Norman M. Behr, Elizabeth Douglas Fry, Richard M. Kain, Laban Lacy Rice, Augustus L. Richards, Winthrop Tilley*, 232
READER REPLIES, THE (Miscellaneous Comments), *Marshall A. Best, Nancy Langhorne Cone, Henry J. Friesen, Daniel G. Hoffman, Henry Dexter Learned, Wright Morris, Dudley Strasburg, Samuel Howard Titus*, 359
Redding, Saunders, 112
Religion and Science, Freud, *David Riesman*, 267
Retort Circumstantial, The, *Jacques Barzun*, 289
REVOLVING BOOKSTAND, THE (**Faith and Despair: The Alcotts and Mark Twain**), *Saunders Redding*, 112
REVOLVING BOOKSTAND, THE, *George Biddle, Dudley Fitts, Melville J. Herskovits, Laurence Sears*, 240
REVOLVING BOOKSTAND, THE, *Jacques Barzun, Alain Locke, John J. Maloney, Louis Simpson*, 366
REVOLVING BOOKSTAND, THE, *Robert K. Carr, F.W. Dupee, George Genzmer, William York Tindall*, 476
Rice, Laban Lacy, 107, 232
Richards, Augustus L., 233
Riesman, David, 267
Rodgers, Andrew Denny, III, 336
Rossiter, Clinton, 19
Rowan, John V., 498
Saddai, Arnfried, 124
Salomon, I. L., 455
Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr., 341
Scholar in a Time of Peril, The, *Elmer Davis*, 9
Scholars, A Loyalty Oath for (EDITORIAL), *Hippocrates, Jr.*, 265
Science, Freud, Religion and, *David Riesman*, 267
Sears, Laurence, 137, 240
Security and Liberty, *Laurence Sears*, 137
Security and the Search for Truth (Book Review), *Laurence Sears*, 240
Simpson, Louis, 162, 304, 376
Slobs and the English Language, Snobs, *Donald J. Lloyd*, 279
Slote, Bernice, 446
Snobs, Slobs and the English Language, *Donald J. Lloyd*, 279
South and the New Freedom: An Interpretation, The, *Arthur S. Link*, 314
Southern Demagogue, Flowering of the, *Reinhard H. Luthin*, 185
Spy Hunt, Wordsworth and the, *George W. Meyer*, 50
Still a Good Book (Book Review), *F. W. Dupee*, 480
Strasburg, Dudley, 361

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Tate, Allen, 86, 218
Television: How Bad Can It Be? *Mahonri Sharp Young*, 447
Theobald, J. Dennis, 494
There Is Something New to Tell (Poem), *Eve Triem*, 71
Thomas Jefferson Survives, *Julian P. Boyd*, 163
Tilley, Winthrop, 235
Time of Peril, The Scholar in a, *Elmer Davis*, 9
Tindall, William York, 482
Titus, Samuel Howard, 361
To a Young Archaeologist (Poem), *Marcia Lee Anderson*, 150
Tonsor, Charles A., 500
Translating, On Translators and, *Lewis Galantière*, 435
Triem, Eve, 71
True Weather for Women, The (Poem), *Louis Simpson*, 312
Twentieth Birthday, A (EDITORIAL), *W. Bagehot, Jr.*, 393
UNDER WHATEVER SKY, *Irwin Edman*, 109, 236, 362, 473
Values in the Western World, Changing (FORUM), *Simon Michael Bessie, Alan Gregg, Hiram Haydn, Matthew Huxley, Alain Locke, Walter Mehring, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Frederick A. Weiss*, 341
Van Doren, Mark, 396
Viereck, Peter, 215
Weiss, Frederick A., 341
Welsh, Clement, 422
West, The Near East between East and, *Charles Malik*, 425
Western World, Changing Values in the (FORUM), *Simon Michael Bessie, Alan Gregg, Hiram Haydn, Matthew Huxley, Alain Locke, Walter Mehring, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Frederick A. Weiss*, 341
Whitton, Mary Ormsbee, 175
Williamson, W. Rulon, 106
Wilson, Ian, 80
Withers, A. M., 496
Wordsworth and the Spy Hunt, *George W. Meyer*, 50
Wright, Walter F., 472
Young, Mahonri Sharp, 447

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